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ANTHONY JOHN

BY

JEROME K. JEROME

Author of "Passing of the Third Floor Back,"
"All Roads Lead to Calvary," etc.

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ANTHONY JOHN

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CHAPTER I

ANTHONY JOHN STRONG'NTH'ARM—to distinguish him from his father, whose Christian names were John Anthony—was born in a mean street of Millsborough some forty-five years before the date when this story should of rights begin. For the first half-minute of his existence he lay upon the outstretched hand of Mrs. Plumberry and neither moved nor breathed. The very young doctor, nervous by reason of this being his first maternity case since his setting up in practice for himself, and divided between his duty to the child or to the mother, had unconsciously decided on the latter. Instinctively he knew that children in the poorer quarters of Millsborough were plentiful and generally not wanted. The mother, a high-cheeked, thin-lipped woman, lay with closed eyes, her long hands clawing convulsively at the bed-clothes. The doctor was bending over her, fumbling with his hypodermic syringe.

Suddenly from behind him he heard the sound of two resounding slaps, the second being followed by a howl that, feeble though it was, contained a decided note of indignation. The doctor turned his head. The child was kicking vigorously.

"Do you always do that?" asked the young doctor. He had been glad when he had been told that Mrs. Plumberry was to be the midwife, having heard good repute of her as a woman of experience.

"It starts them," explained Mrs. Plumberry. "I suppose they don't like it and want to say so; and before they can yell out they find they've got to draw some air into their lungs."

She was a stout motherly soul, the wife of a small farmer on the outskirts of the town, and only took cases during the winter. At other times, as she would explain, there were the pigs and the poultry to occupy her mind. She was fond of animals of all kinds.

"It's the fighting instinct," suggested the young doctor. "Curious how quickly it shows itself."

"When it's there," commented Mrs. Plumberry, proceeding with her work.

"Isn't it always there?" demanded the young doctor.

"Not always," answered Mrs. Plumberry. "Some of them will just lie down and let the others trample them to death. Four out of one litter of eleven I lost last March. There they were when I came in the morning. Seemed to have taken no interest in themselves. Had just let the others push them away."

The child, now comfortable on Mrs. Plumberry's ample arm, was playing with clenched fists, breathing peacefully. The doctor looked at him, relieved.

"Seems to have made a fair start, anyhow," thought the doctor.

Mrs. Plumberry with thumb and forefinger raised an eyelid and let it fall again. The baby answered with a vicious kick.

"He's come to stop all right," was Mrs. Plumberry's prophecy. "Hope he'll like it. Will it be safe for me to put him to the mother, say in about half an hour?"

The woman with closed eyes upon the bed must have heard, for she tried to raise her arms. The doctor bent over her once more.

"I think so," he answered. "Use your own discretion. I'll look back in an hour or so."

The doctor was struggling into his great coat. He glanced from the worn creature on the bed to

the poverty-stricken room, and then through the window to the filthy street beyond.

"I wonder sometimes," he growled, "why the women don't strike—chuck the whole thing. What can be the good of it from their point of view?"

The idea had more than once occurred to Mrs. Plumberry herself, so that she was not as shocked as perhaps she should have been.

"Oh, some of them get on," she answered philosophically. "Each woman thinks it will be her brat who will climb upon the backs of the others and that that's all the others are wanted for."

"Maybe," agreed the young doctor. He closed the door softly behind him.

Mrs. Plumberry waited till the woman on the bed opened her large eyes, then she put the child into her arms.

"Get all you can in case it don't last long," was Mrs. Plumberry's advice to him as she arranged the bed-clothes. The child gave a grunt of acquiescence and settled himself to his work.

"I prayed it might be a boy," whispered the woman. "He'll be able to help in the workshop."

"It never does any harm," agreed Mrs. Plumberry. "Sometimes you get answered. And if you don't, there's always the feeling that you've

done your best. Don't let him exhaust you. It don't do to leave it to their conscience."

The woman drew the child tighter to her pallid bosom.

"I want him to be strong," she whispered. "It's a hard world for the weak."

Never a child in all Mrs. Plumberry's experience had been more difficult to wean. Had he merely had his mother to contend with it is difficult to say how the matter might have ended. But Mrs. Plumberry took an interest in her cases that was more than mercenary, keeping an eye on them till she was satisfied that her help was no longer needed. He put up a good fight, as Mrs. Plumberry herself admitted; but having at last grasped the fact that he was up against something stronger than himself, it was characteristic of him, as the future was to show, that he gave way quite suddenly, and transferred without any further fuss his energy to the bottle. Also it was characteristic of him that, knowing himself defeated, he bore no ill-will to his conqueror.

"You're a good loser," commented Mrs. Plumberry, as the child, accepting without protest the India rubber teat she had just put into his mouth, looked up into her face and smiled. "Perhaps

you'll be a good winner. They generally go together." She bent down and gave him a kiss, which for Mrs. Plumberry was an unusual display of emotion. He had a knack of making his way with people, especially people who could be useful to him.

It seemed a freak of Nature that, born of a narrow-chested father and a flat-breasted, small-hipped mother, he should be so strong and healthy. He never cried when he couldn't get his own way —and he wanted his own way in all things and wanted it quickly—but would howl at the top of his voice. In the day-time it was possible to appease him swiftly; and then he would gurgle and laugh and put out his little hands to pat any cheek that might be near. But at night-time it was not so easy to keep pace with him. His father would mutter sleepy curses. How could he do his day's work if he was to be kept awake night after night? The others had merely whimpered. A man could sleep through it.

"The others" had been two girls. The first one had died when three years old, and the second had lived only a few months.

"It's because he's strong," explained the mother. "It does his lungs good."

"And what about my weak heart?" the man

grumbled. "You don't think about me. It's all him now."

The woman did not answer. She knew it to be the truth.

He was a good man, hard-working, sober and kind in his fretful, complaining way. Her people and she herself, had thought she had done well when she had married him. She had been in service, looked down upon by her girl acquaintances who were earning their living in factories and shops; and he had been almost a gentleman, though it was difficult to remember that now. The Strong-'nth'arms had once been prosperous yeomen and had hunted with the gentry. Rumour had it that scattered members of the family were even now doing well in the colonies, and both husband and wife still cherished the hope that some far-flung relation would providentially die and leave them a fortune. Otherwise the future promised little more than an everlasting struggle against starvation. He had started as a mechanical engineer in his own workshop. There were plenty of jobs for such in Millsborough, but John Strong'nth'arm seemed to be one of those born unfortunates doomed always to choose instinctively the wrong turning. An inventor of a kind. Some of his ideas had prospered—other people.

"If only I had my rights. If only I'd had justice done me. If only I hadn't been cheated and robbed!"

Little Anthony John, as he grew to understanding, became familiar with such phrases, repeated in a shrill, weak voice that generally ended in a cough, with clenched hands raised in futile appeal to Somebody his father seemed to be seeing through the roof of the dark, untidy workshop, where the place for everything seemed to be on the floor, and where his father seemed always to be looking for things he couldn't find.

A childish, kindly man! Assured of a satisfactory income, a woman might have found him lovable, have been indulgent to his helplessness. But the poor have no use for weakness. They cannot afford it. The child instinctively knew that his mother despised this dreamy-eyed, loose-lipped man always full of fear; but though it was to his mother that he looked to answer his questions and supply his wants, it was his father he first learnt to love. The littered workshop with its glowing furnace became his nursery. Judging from his eyes, it amused him when his father, having laid aside a tool, was quite unable the next minute to remember where he had put it. The child would watch him for a time while he cursed and splut-

tered, and then, jumping down from his perch, would quietly hand it to him. The man came to rely upon him for help.

"You didn't notice, by any chance, where I put a little brass wheel yesterday—about so big?" would be the question. John, the man, would go on with his job; and a minute later Anthony, the child, would return with the lost wheel. Once the man had been out all the afternoon. On entering the workshop in the evening he stood and stared. The bench had been cleared and swept; and neatly arranged upon it were laid out all his tools. He was still staring at them when he heard the door softly opened and a little, grinning face was peering round the jar. The man burst into tears, and then, ashamed of himself, searched in vain for a handkerchief. The child slipped a piece of clean waste into his hand and laughed.

For years the child did not know that the world was not all sordid streets and reeking slums. There was a place called the Market Square where men shouted and swore and women scolded and haggled, and calves bellowed and pigs squealed. And farther still away a space of trampled grass and sooty shrubs surrounded by chimneys belching smoke. But sometimes, on days when in the morning his father had cursed fate more than usual, had

raised clenched hands towards the roof of the workshop more often than wont, his mother would disappear for many hours, returning with good things tied up in a brown-paper parcel. And in the evening Somebody who dwelt far away would be praised and blessed.

The child was puzzled who this Somebody could be. He wondered if it might be the Party the other side of the workshop roof to whom his father made appeal for right and justice. But that could hardly be, for the Dweller beyond the workshop roof was apparently stone-deaf; while his mother never came back empty handed.

One evening there drew nearer the sound of singing and a tambourine. Little Anthony opened the workshop door and peered out. Some half a dozen men and women were gathered round the curb, and one was talking.

She spoke of a gentleman named God. He lived far off and very high up. And all good things came from Him. There was more of it: about the power and the glory of Him, and how everybody ought to be afraid of Him and love Him. But little Anthony remembered he had left the door of the workshop open and so hurried back. They moved on a little later. The child heard them singing as they passed.

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him all creatures here below."

The rest of the verse was drowned by the tambourine.

So it was to God that his mother made these frequent excursions, returning always laden with good things. Had she not explained to him, as an excuse for not taking him with her, that it was a long way off and up ever so high? Next year, perhaps, when his legs were sturdier. He did not tell her of his discovery. Mrs. Plumberry divided children into two classes: the children who talked and never listened and the children who listened and kept their thoughts to themselves. But one day, when his mother took her only bonnet from its wrappings and was putting it on in front of the fly-blown glass, he plucked at her sleeve. She turned. He had rolled down his stockings, displaying a pair of sturdy legs. It was one of his characteristics, even as a child, that he never wasted words. "Feel 'em," was all he said.

His mother remembered. It happened to be a fine day, so far as one could judge beneath the smoke of Millsborough. She sent him to change into his best clothes, while she finished her own preparations, and together they set forth. She

wondered at his evident excitement. It was beyond what she had expected.

It was certainly a long way; but the child seemed not to notice it. They left the din and smoke of Millsborough behind them. They climbed by slow degrees to a wonderful country. The child longed to take it in his arms, it was so beautiful. The woman talked at intervals, but the child did not hear her. At the journey's end the gate stood open and they passed in.

And suddenly they came across him, walking in the garden. His mother was greatly flustered. She was full of apologies, stammering and repeating herself. She snatched little Anthony's cap off his head, and all the while she kept on curtseying, sinking almost to her knees. He was a very old gentleman dressed in gaiters and a Norfolk jacket. He wore side whiskers and a big moustache and walked with the aid of a stick. He patted Anthony on the head and gave him a shilling. He called Mrs. Strong'nth'arm "Nelly"; and hoped her husband would soon get work. And then remarking that she knew her way, he lifted his tweed cap and disappeared.

The child waited in a large clean room. Ladies in white caps fluttered in and out, and one brought him milk and wonderful things to eat; and later his

mother returned with a larger parcel than usual and they left the place behind them. It was not until they were beyond the gates that the child broke his silence, and then he looked round carefully before speaking.

"He didn't look so very glorious," he said.

"Who didn't?" demanded his mother.

"God."

His mother dropped her bundle. Fortunately it was on a soft place.

"What maggot has the child got into his head?" she ejaculated. "What do you mean by 'God'?"

"Him," persisted Anthony. "Isn't it from him that we get all these good things?" He pointed to the parcel.

His mother picked it up. "Who's been talking to you?" she asked.

"I overheard her," explained the child. "She said it was from God that we got all our good things. Ain't it?"

His mother took him by the hand and they trudged on. She did not answer for a time.

"That wasn't God," she told him at last. "That was Sir William Coomber. I used to be in service there."

She lapsed into silence again. The bundle seemed heavy.

"Of course it is God that gives it us in a manner of speaking," she explained. "He puts it into Sir William's heart to be kind and generous."

The child thought a while.

"But they're his things, ain't they?" he asked. "The other one's. Sir William's?"

"Yes; but God gave them to him."

It seemed a roundabout business.

"Why doesn't God give us things?" he demanded. "Don't He like us?"

"Oh, I don't know," answered the woman. "Don't ask so many questions."

It was longer, the way home. He offered no protest at being sent to bed early. He dreamed he was wandering to and fro in a vast place, looking for God. Over and over again he thought he saw Him in the distance, but every time he got near to Him it turned out to be Sir William Coomber, who patted him on the head and gave him a shilling.

CHAPTER II

THERE was an aunt and uncle. Mr. Joseph Newt, of Moor End Lane, Millsborough, was Mrs. Strong'nth'arm's only surviving brother. He was married to a woman older than himself. She had been a barmaid, but after her marriage had "got religion," as they say up North.

They were not much to boast of. Mr. Newt was a dog-fancier; and according to his own account an atheist, whether from conviction or mere love of sport his friends had never been able to decide. Earnest young ministers of all denominations generally commenced their career in Millsborough by attempting his conversion, much encouraged during the earlier stages of the contest by Mr. Newt's predisposition in all matters towards what he called a "waiting game." The "knock-out" blow had not yet been delivered. His wife had long since abandoned him to Satan. The only thing, as far as she could see, was to let him enjoy as much peace and comfort in this world as circumstances would permit. In Anthony John's eyes the inevitable doom awaiting him gave to his

uncle an interest and importance that Mr. Newt's somewhat insignificant personality might otherwise have failed to inspire. The child had heard about hell. A most unpleasant place where wicked people went to when they died. But his uncle, with his twinkling eyes and his merry laugh, was not his idea of a bad man.

"Is uncle very, very wicked?" he once demanded of his aunt.

"No; he's not wicked," replied his aunt, assuming a judicial tone. "Better than nine men out of ten that I've ever come across."

"Then why has he got to go to hell?"

"He needn't, if he didn't want to," replied his aunt. "That's the awful thing about it. If he'd only believe, he could be saved."

"Believe what?" inquired Anthony John.

"Oh, I haven't got time to go into all that now," replied his aunt. She was having trouble with the kitchen stove. "Believe what he's told."

"Who told him?"

"Everybody," explained his aunt. "I've told him myself till I'm sick and tired of it. Don't ask so many questions. You're getting as bad as he is."

It worried him, the thought of his uncle going to

hell. Why couldn't he believe this thing, whatever it was, that everybody else believed?

It was an evening or two later. His aunt had gone to chapel. His uncle was smoking his pipe beside the kitchen fire, old Simon, the bob-tailed sheep-dog, looking up at him with adoring eyes. It seemed just the opportunity for a heart-to-heart talk.

He insinuated his hand into his uncle's grimy paw.

"Why don't you believe?" he asked.

His uncle turned on him his little twinkling eyes.

"Believe what?" he counter-questioned.

"What everybody believes," the child answered.

The little man shook his head.

"Don't you believe them," he answered. "They don't believe any more than I believe. They just say it because they think they're going to get something out of it."

The little man reached forward for the poker and gently stirred the fire.

"If they believed all they say that they believe," he continued, "this world would be a very different place to what it is. That's what I always tell them, and that's what they're never able to answer and never will be."

He laid down the poker and turned again to the child.

"You'll hear it all in good time, my lad," he said. " 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' 'Do unto others as you would they should do unto you.' 'Sell all thou hast and give it to the poor.' That's what their God tells them. Do you see them doing it?"

The little man laughed a merry, good-tempered laugh.

"Why, old Simon has got more sense than they have." He stooped and patted the shaggy head resting upon his knee. "He knows it wouldn't be any good, just looking at me as though he loved me, and then not doing what I told him."

He refilled his pipe and lighted it.

"I'll believe," he added, "when I see them believing."

Anthony John liked visiting the tumble-down cottage in Moor End Lane. His mother was nervous of the consequences. But Mrs. Plumberry's view was that those who talked the loudest are not always the most dangerous.

"The little man's got plenty of horse sense," so Mrs. Plumberry argued, "and what Emma Newt don't know about heaven and how to get there, isn't worth trying to find out, so far as I can judge. Be-

tween the two of them he isn't likely to get any harm even if he doesn't get much good. Anyhow, he gets a square meal."

The dogs were the chief attraction to Anthony John. He had never been let to play in the street with the other children of the neighbourhood. It was in the dismantled railway carriage at the bottom of his uncle's garden that he first tasted play. His uncle had taken him in and introduced him. There was first and foremost old Simon, the bob-tailed sheep-dog. The others came and went, but old Simon was not for sale. The next oldest inhabitant of the railway carriage was a smooth-coated retriever bitch. She had constituted herself old Simon's chief assistant, always prepared to help him on the many occasions when riot had to be suppressed. It was wonderful how both dogs knew the exact moment when fighting in play turned to fighting in anger. Then not a moment was to be lost. Bess would stand ready, but she never interfered unless Simon gave a peculiar low bark that meant he wanted her. He had been instructed not to call her in if he could possibly do without her.

"Never invite a woman to take part in a row you can manage by yourself," his master had confided to him. "Once in, they never know when to stop."

On the day of Anthony John's first visit Bess was in a good mood to receive strangers. Her four puppies had just reached the fighting stage. She was absurdly proud of them and welcomed an audience. They fell upon Anthony John with one accord. His uncle was watching out of a corner of his eye. But the child only laughed and hit back at them. There were terriers of all sorts, bred rather for brain and muscle than for points: their purchasers being generally the tenants of lonely farms upon the moors who, wanting them as watchdogs and to keep down the rats, preferred smartness to pedigree. Mr. Newt's pride was in his bull pups, for which he had a special *clientèle* among neighbouring miners. He kept these apart in a railed off corner of the carriage, and once or twice a week, instead of feeding them separately, he would throw a big meaty bone into their midst, and then, leaning over the iron rail, watch the fight. The dog that most often secured the bone, leaving the others hungry, would be specially marked out for favour. His uncle, going in among them, would pat and praise him; and for him henceforward would be reserved the choicest food and the chiefest care.

The dogs soon got to know him and would welcome him with a joyous rush. The child would

go down on all fours and would be one of them, and together they would roll and tumble in the straw. It was jolly to feel their soft paws pressing against his body, their cold damp noses pushed against his hands and face. There were mimic fights when they would tug his hair and bite his toes, and he would pull their silky ears and grab them by their hair. And, oh! the shouting and the barking and the growling and the laughing!

Life was fine in the long low railway carriage where one gave free play to one's limbs and lungs and none were afraid.

And sometimes for no reason the glorious gambol would suddenly blaze up into anger. The bite would sting, and in the growl there would be menace. The child would spring up with a savage cry and go for his foe with clenched fists and snarling mouth, and the whole pack would be fighting one another senselessly and in real earnest. Then in an instant old Simon would be among them. He never talked. The shaggy head would move so swiftly that none knew where to expect it, and old Simon would be standing with a space around him faced by a circle of fierce eyes. But, generally speaking, none cared to break into that space. The child would hate old Simon for his interference and would punch at him viciously, trying to get

across his huge body to the dog he wanted to tear and mangle. But feint and dodge as he might, it was always old Simon's rump that was towards him, and at that he could punch as hard as he liked.

Five minutes later they would all be friends again, licking one another's wounds. Old Simon would lie blinking his wistful, dreamy eyes.

It had been a slack year. Many of the mills had had to close down. Added to this there came a strike among the miners and distress grew daily. Mrs. Newt took the opportunity to buy a second-hand tombstone. It had been ordered by one of the pumpmen for his mother, but when the strike came the stonemason suggested payment on account, and as this was not forthcoming he had put the stone aside. Unfortunately for him he had already carved as far as "Sacred to the Memory of Mildred," which was not a common name in Millsborough. It happened, however, to be Mrs. Newt's, though on her conversion she had dropped it as savouring too much of worldliness, employing instead her second name, which was Emily. Hearing of the incident, Mrs. Newt called upon the stonemason and, taking full advantage of the man's dilemma, had secured the stone for about one-third of its value. She had had the rest of the lettering completed, leaving to be filled in only the date of

her death. It was an imposing-looking stone and Mrs. Newt was proud of it. She would often go and gaze at it where it stood in an out-of-the-way corner of the stonemason's yard; and one day she took Anthony to see it. Her only anxiety now was about her grave. There was one particular site near to a willow tree that she much desired. It belonged to a baker who had secured it some years before on learning that he was suffering from an intermittent heart. The unemployment among the weavers, added to the strike of the miners, was making it difficult for him to collect his money, and Mrs. Newt was hopeful that an offer of ready cash at the right moment might induce him to sell.

"It's a sad world," she confided to Anthony John as she stood affectionately regarding the stone on which the verse of a hymn had been carved implying that Mildred Emily Newt had departed for realms of endless bliss. "Can't say as I shall be sorry to leave it."

It promised to be a hard winter for the poor of Millsborough. The coal strike had ended only to make way for trouble in the steel works. Somewhere the other side of the world the crops had failed. Bread rose in price each week; and there were pinched and savage faces in the streets.

His uncle had gone up to the moors to try and

sell a terrier. His aunt sat knitting by the kitchen fire. Little Anthony had come in to warm himself before returning home. It was cold in the railway carriage. There were not enough of them there now to keep it warm. He was sitting with his knee clasped in his hands.

"Why doesn't God stop it?" he demanded suddenly. His knowledge had advanced since the day he had thought Sir William Coomber was God.

"Stop what?" inquired his aunt continuing her knitting.

"The strike. Why doesn't he put everything all right? Can't He?"

"Of course He could," explained his aunt. "If He wanted to."

"Why don't He want to? Doesn't He want everybody to be happy?"

It appeared He did, but there were difficulties in the way. Men and women were wicked—were born wicked: that was the trouble.

"But why were we born wicked?" persisted the child. "Didn't God make us?"

"Of course He made us. God made everything."

"Why didn't He make us good?"

It seemed He had made us good. Adam and Eve were both quite good, in the beginning. If

only they had remained good—hadn't disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit we might all of us have been good and happy to this day.

"He was the first man, wasn't he—Adam?" demanded the child.

"Yes. God made him out of the earth. And saw that he was good."

"How long ago would that be?" he asked.

His aunt was not sure of the exact date. A long time ago.

"A hundred years?"

Longer than that. Thousands and thousands of years ago.

"Why couldn't Adam have said he was sorry and God have forgiven him?"

"It was too late," explained his aunt. "You see, he'd done it."

"What made him eat it? If he was a good man and God had told him not to?"

It was explained to him that the Devil had tempted Adam—or rather Eve. It seemed unimportant so far as their unfortunate descendants were concerned.

"But why did God let the Devil tempt him—or her, whichever it was. Can't God do everything? Why didn't He kill the Devil?"

Mrs. Newt regarded her knitting with dismay.

While talking to Anthony John she had lost count of her stitches. Added to which it was time for Anthony John to go home. His mother would be getting anxious.

His aunt, though visiting was not much in her line, dropped in on his mother a day or two later. Mrs. Plumberry happened to have looked in for a gossip and a cup of tea the same afternoon. His aunt felt sure that Anthony John would be helpful to his father in the workshop.

In the evening his mother informed him that she and his father had decided to give to him the opportunity of learning whatever there was to be learnt about such things as God and sin and the everlasting soul of man. She didn't put it in these words, but that was the impression she conveyed. On the very next Sunday that was he should go to chapel; and there kind ladies and gentlemen who understood these matters, perhaps even better than his aunt herself, would answer all his questions and make all things plain to him.

They were most kind and sympathetic to him at the Sunday school. His aunt had prepared them for him, and they welcomed him as promising material. There was one young man in particular with an æsthetic face and long black hair that he had a habit of combing with his hand; and a plain

young woman with wonderfully kind eyes, who in the middle of a hymn suddenly caught him up and hugged him. But they didn't really help him. They assured him that God loved us and wanted us all to be good and happy. But they didn't explain to him why God had overlooked the devil. He had never said a word to Adam about the devil—had never so much as warned him. It seemed to Anthony John that the serpent had taken God as much by surprise as he had Adam and Eve. It seemed unfair to Anthony John that the whole consequences of the unforseen catastrophe should have been visited on Adam and Eve; and even more unfair that he himself, Anthony John, coming into the world thousands of years later, and who, as far as he could see, had had nothing whatever to do with the business, should be deemed, for all practical purposes, as an accomplice before the act. It was not that he argued it thus to himself. All he was conscious of was a vague resentful feeling that it wasn't fair. When his mother had sent him out on his first errand she had warned him of bad boys who would try to take his money away from him, as a result of which he had kept a sharp look-out and, seeing a couple of boys who looked as though they might be bad, he had taken the precaution of walking close behind a policeman. It seemed to

him that Adam hadn't been given a dog's chance.

They told him that, later on, God was sorry for us and had put things right by letting His only Son die for us. It was a beautiful story they told him about this Jesus, the Son of God. He wondered who had suggested the idea, and had decided that it must have been the little lad Jesus who had first thought of it and had persuaded God to let Him do it. Somehow he convinced himself that he would have done just the same. Looking down from heaven on the poor people below, and thinking of their all going to hell, he would have felt so sorry for them.

But the more he thought about it all the more he couldn't understand why God instead of merely turning Satan out of heaven, hadn't finished him off then and there. He might have known he would be up to mischief.

At first his teachers had encouraged him to ask them questions, but later on they changed their minds. They told him he would understand all these things better as he grew up. Meanwhile he mustn't think, but listen and believe.

CHAPTER III

MR. STRONG'NTH'ARM lay ill. It was just his luck. For weeks he had been kicking his heels about the workshop, cursing Fate for not sending him a job. And Fate —the incorrigible joker that she is—had knocked at his door ten days ago with an order that he reckoned would keep him going for a month, and then a week later had struck him down with pleurisy. They told him that if he kept quiet and didn't rave and fling his arms about, sending the bedclothes half a dozen times a day on to the floor, he would soon get well. But what was the good of everybody talking? What was to become of them? This job, satisfactorily completed and sent home, would have led to others—would have started him on his feet again. Now it would be taken away from him and sent elsewhere to be finished. Mrs. Strong'nth'arm made pilgrimages to the great house, returning with hot-house grapes. Mrs. Newt came with a basket. Both she and her husband would like to have done more; but times were bad. Even believers were in difficulty. Mrs. Newt suggested resignation.

It was the fourth morning after Mr. Strong'nth'-arm's seizure, Anthony, putting on for warmth his father's overcoat, had crept down in the faint dawn to light the kitchen fire, his mother being busy in the bedroom. He had just succeeded, and a little blaze leapt up and threw fantastic shadows on the whitewashed walls. Looking round, he saw the shape of a squat hobgoblin with a tiny head. He moved his arms, and immediately the hobgoblin responded with a gigantic gesture of delight. From the fireplace, now behind him, there came a cheerful crackling sound; it was just the noise that a merry old witch would make when laughing. The child, holding high the skirts of his long coat, began to dance; and the hobgoblin's legs were going like mad. Suddenly the door opened and there stood the oddest of figures. He was short and bow-legged and had a big beard. He wore a peaked cap, and over his shoulder he carried a bundle hooked on to a stick. Without a doubt 'twas the King of the Gnomes. He flung down his bundle and stretched out his hands. The child ran towards him. Lord how he danced! His little bow legs moved like lightning and his arms were so strong he could toss little Anthony up with one hand and catch him again with the other. The little bright flame stretched up higher and higher

as if the better to see the fun. The merry old witch laughed louder. And the shadows on the wall got so excited that they tumbled down flat on the ceiling.

His mother called from above to know if the kettle was boiling; and at that the little flame turned pale and disappeared. The merry old witch was as quiet as a mouse. The shadows ran up the chimney and the light came in at the door.

Anthony didn't answer his mother. He was rubbing his eyes. He thought he must still be in bed. It was the King of the Gnomes that called up the stairs to say that the kettle would be boiling in five minutes. Mrs. Strong'nth'arm, hearing a strange voice, came down as she was. She found her son Anthony distraught and still rubbing his eyes. The King of the Gnomes was pushing carefully selected pieces of wood through the bars of the grate and blowing them with his mouth. He held one of his enormous hands in front of his golden beard to save it from being singed. He knew Mrs. Strong-'nth'arm quite well and shook hands with her. She looked at him as if she had seen him before—somewhere, some time, or else had heard him described; she wasn't sure which. She seemed to be glad to see him without knowing why. At first she was a bit afraid of him. But that was all gone be-

fore the tea was ready. Anthony watched his mother with astonishment. She was one of those bustling, restless women, constitutionally unable to keep still for a minute. Something had bewitched her. She stood with her hands folded and wasn't even talking. She might have been a visitor. It was the King of the Gnomes that made the tea and cut the bread and butter. He seemed to know where everything was. The fire was burning brightly. As a rule it was the devil to get going. This morning it had met its master. He passed Mrs. Strong'nth'arm and went upstairs with the tray and still as if in a dream she followed him.

Anthony crept to the bottom of the stairs and listened. The King of the Gnomes was talking to his father. He had a tremendously deep voice. Just the voice one would expect from a gentleman who lived always underground. Anthony could feel the vibrations of it underneath his feet. Compared with it, the voices of his father and his mother sounded like the chorus of the little terriers when old Simon was giving tongue.

And suddenly there happened a great wonder. His mother laughed. Never before that he could remember had he heard his mother laugh. Feeling that strange things were in the wind, he crept

out into the yard and washed himself under the pump.

Three weeks the King of the Gnomes dwelt with them. Every morning he and Anthony would go into the workshop. The furnace would be still a-glow with the embers of the night before. Of course the King of the Gnomes would be at home with a forge and an anvil. But even so, Anthony would marvel at his dexterity and strength. The great sinewy hands, that to save time or to make a neater finish would often bend the metal to its shape without the help of other tools, could coax to their place the smallest screws, fix to a hair's breadth the most delicate adjustments. Of course he never let on that he was the King of the Gnomes. Only the child knew that; and a warning hairy finger, or a wink of his laughing blue eye would caution Anthony not to give away the secret when third parties were around.

He never went out. When not in the workshop he was busy about the house. Of course, when you come to think of it, there are no lady gnomes, so that accounted for his being equally apt at woman's work. Mrs. Strong'nth'arm had little else to do but to nurse her husband; and even at that he would take his turn when she went marketing; and of evenings, while talking, he would help

her with her darning. There seemed to be nothing those great hands could not do.

Nobody knew of his coming. His mother had taken Anthony aside on the first morning and had impressed upon him that he was not to say a word. But he would not, even if she had not told him; for if you did the King of the Gnomes at once vanished underground. It was not till days after he was gone that Mrs. Strong'nth'arm mentioned his visit, and then only to Mrs. Plumberry under oath of secrecy.

Mrs. Plumberry, being so often where there was sorrow, had met him once herself. Wandering Peter the country folk called him. Mrs. Plumberry marvelled at his having visited the Strong-'nth'arms. It was rarely that he came into towns. He must have heard of their trouble. He had ways of his own of finding out where he was wanted. At lambing time, when the snow lay deep upon the hills, they had learnt to listen for his cheery whistling drawing nearer through the darkness. He might have been a shepherd all his life. He would take the writhing ewes in his two big hands, and at his touch they would cease their groaning. And when in some lonely cottage man or child lay sick, and there was none to help, the good wife would remember stories she had heard and, slipping out

beyond the hedge, would peer with straining eyes into the night. And for sure and certain—so the legend ran—there would come to her the sound of footsteps through the heather and Wandering Peter would emerge out of the shadows and would greet her. There he would stay till there was no longer need of him, doctoring and nursing, or taking the good man's place at the plough. He would take no wage beyond his food and lodging. At his departure he would ask for a day's rations to put into his bundle, and from those who might have it to spare an old coat or a pair of boots not altogether past the mending.

Where he had his dwelling none knew, but lost folk upon the moors, when overtaken by the darkness, would call to him; and then, so it was said, he would suddenly appear and put them on their way. They told of an old curmudgeon who, but for a snarling cur as savage as himself, lived alone in a shanty among the rocks. A venomous, blasphemous old scoundrel. The country people feared and hated him. They said he had the evil eye, and when a cow died in the calfing or a sow ate her young, the curses would be deep and bitter against old Michael—old Nick, as they termed him—of the quarry.

One night, poaching, old Michael stumbled and

fell to the bottom of a rocky chasm. He lay there with a broken leg and the blood flowing from a wound in his head. His cries came back to him from the rocks, and his only hope was in his dog. It had gone to seek help he knew, for they cared for one another in their snarling way, these two. But what could the brute do? His dog was known and hated as far as Mike himself. It would be stoned from every door. None would follow it to rescue him. He cursed it for a fool and his eyes closed.

When he opened them Wandering Peter was lifting him up in his strong arms. The dog had not wasted his voice upon the neighbours. No cottage or farm had been wakened by his barking. It was Wandering Peter he had sought.

There was a girl who had "got herself into trouble," as the saying is, and had been turned out of her place. Not knowing where else to go she had returned home, though she guessed her greeting would be cruel, for her father was a hard, stern man and had always been proud of his good name. She had climbed slowly the long road across the wolds, and the short winter's day was fading when she reached the farm. As she feared, he had slammed the door in her face, and creeping away, she had lain down in the woods thinking to die.

Her father had watched her from the house. Through the night he had struggled with himself, and towards morning had lighted the lantern and gone in search of her. But she had disappeared.

It was a strange story that she told when, weeks later, she reappeared with her child at her breast. She said that Christ had come to her. He had golden hair and a golden beard, but she knew him to be Christ because of his kind eyes. He had lifted her up as though she had been a child; and, warm against his breast, he had carried her through the night till they came to a dwelling place among rocks. There he had laid her down upon a bed of soft dry moss, and there the child had been born, Christ tending her with hands so gentle she had felt no pain. She did not know that she had been there for over a month. To her it had seemed but a little time. All she could tell was that she had been very happy and had wanted for nothing and that he had told her "beautiful things." One day he told her that all was well now with her and the child and that her father longed for her. And that night he had carried her and the child in his arms; and in the morning they came to the edge of the wood from where she could see the farm. And there Christ had blessed her and the child and left

her. And her father had come across the fields to meet her.

They explained to her it was not Christ who had found her. It must have been Wandering Peter. But she never believed them. Later, when Anthony had grown into boyhood, he met her one day on the moors. Her son had gone abroad and for many years he had not written. But she was sure that it was well with him. A white-haired, sweet-faced woman. Not quite "all there" in many ways, it was hinted, and yet with a gift for teaching. She had her daily round among the far-off cottages and scattered hamlets. The children looked forward to her coming. She told them wonderful stories, so they said.

She must have learnt the trick from Wandering Peter, Anthony thought. He remembered how, seated cross-legged upon the bench, he had listened while Peter, when not hammering or filing, had poured forth his endless stories of birds and beasts, of little creeping things and their strange ways, of the life of the deep waters, of far-off lands and other worlds, of the brave things and the sad things that happened long ago. It was from Peter that Anthony first heard the story of Saint Aldys.

Once upon a time, where Millsborough stands today were woods and pleasant pastures. The

winding Wyndbeck, now flowing black and sluggish through long dark echoing tunnels past slimy walls and wharves, was then a silvery stream splashing and foaming among tree-crowned rocks and mossy boulders. Where now tall chimneys belch their smoke and the slag stands piled in endless heaps around the filthy pits, sheep browsed and cattle grazed and little piebald pigs nuzzled for truffles in the soft sweet-smelling earth. The valley of the Wyndbeck then would have been a fair place to dwell in but for evil greedy men who preyed upon the people, driving off their cattle and stealing their crops, making sport of their tears and prayers. And of all the wicked men who harassed and oppressed them none were so cruel and grasping as Aldys of the yellow beard—the Red Badger they called him.

One day the Badger was returning from a foray, and beside him, on an old gaunt pony, secured by a stirrup-leather to the Badger's saddle-girth, rode a little lad. A trooper had found the boy wandering among the blackened ruins, and the Badger, attracted by the lad's beauty, had taken him to be his page.

The Badger rode, singing, pleased with his day's work; and there crept up a white mist from the sea. He did not notice for a time that he and the lad

were riding alone. Then, drawing rein, he blew a long loud blast upon his horn. But there came no answer.

The lad was looking at him with strange eyes; and Red Aldys, seized he knew not why by a sudden frenzy of hate, drew his sword and struck at the little lad with all his strength.

And the sword broke in his hand; and those strange gentle eyes still looked upon Red Aldys. And around the little lad there shone a great light.

And fear fell upon Red Aldys of the yellow beard, and flinging himself upon the ground, he cried in a loud voice: "Christ have mercy upon me a sinner."

And the child Christ laid His hands upon Red Aldys and spoke words of comfort to him and commanded him that he should follow Him and serve Him.

And on the spot where Christ had laid His hands upon him Aldys made for himself a dwelling-place among the rocks beside the winding Wyndbeck. And there for many years he laboured to bring peace and healing to the poor folk of the valley, learning their needs that he might help them. And the fame of him spread far and wide, and many came to him to ask his blessing, repenting of their

evil lives. And he went about among the people teaching the love of the Lord Jesus.

Little Anthony had often passed the great church of St. Aldys just beyond the market square, an imposing building of grey stone with a spire one hundred and eighty feet high. They say that, forming part of its foundations, are the very rocks among which once Saint Aldys dwelt, on the spot where Christ had appeared to him and had forgiven him his sins.

Having heard the story, he felt a longing to see the inside of it, and one afternoon, instead of going to his uncle's, he wandered there. It was surrounded by iron railings and the great iron gates were padlocked. But in a corner, behind a massive buttress, he found a little door that opened. It led into a stone passage and down some steps into a vaulted room where he fell over a chair, and a bat flew out and fluttered silently until it disappeared into the shadows. But he found the church at last. It was vast and high and very, very cold, and only a faint chill light came in through the screened windows. The silence frightened him. He had forgotten to make a note of the way by which he had entered, and all the doors that he tried were securely fastened. A terror seized him

that he would never be able to get out. It seemed to him that he was in a grave.

By luck he blundered back into the little vaulted chamber, and from there groped his way out. He closed the door behind him with a bang. He had a feeling that something was following him and might drag him back. He ran all the way home.

CHAPTER IV

THERE had been a period of prosperity following the strange visit of Wandering Peter. John Strong'nth'arm came back to his workshop another man, or so it seemed to little Anthony. A brisk, self-confident person who often would whistle while he worked. The job on which he had been engaged when taken ill had been well finished and further orders had resulted. There were times when the temporary assistance of an old jobbing tinker and his half-witted son was needful. Mrs. Strong'nth'arm, discussing things in general with a neighbour, would casually refer to "Our workpeople." That uncle in Australia, or elsewhere, who had been fading year by year almost to disappearing point, reappeared out of the shadows. With the gambler's belief that when once the luck changes every venture is bound to come home, she regarded his sudden demise as merely a question of time. She wondered how much he would leave them. She hoped it would be sufficient to enable them to become gentlefolks.

"What is a gentlefolk?" asked Anthony, to whom she had been talking.

It was explained to him that gentlefolk were people who did not have to work for their living. Mrs. Strong'nth'arm had served them and knew.

There were others, who sat in offices and gave orders. To this lesser rank it was possible to climb by industry and virtue. But first of all you must go to school and learn.

His mother caught him up in her thin arms and pressed him passionately to her narrow bosom.

"You will be a gentleman," she prophesied. "I feel it. I've prayed God every night since you were born." She smothered him with kisses and then put him down.

"Don't say anything to your father," she added. "He doesn't understand."

He rather hoped his uncle in Australia wouldn't leave them too much money. He liked work: fighting with things, conquering them; tidying the workshop; combing the fleas out of his uncle's dogs. Lighting the kitchen fire was fun even when it was so cold that he wasn't quite sure he'd a nose on his face and could only tell what his hands were doing by looking at them. You lit the paper and then coaxed and blew and watched the little flame grow bigger, feeding it and guiding it. And when you had won, you warmed your hands.

His father had taught him to read during the

many hours when there had been nothing else to do. They had sat side by side upon the bench, their legs dangling, holding the open book between them. And writing of a sort he had learnt for himself, having heard his mother regret that she had not studied it herself when young. His mother felt he was predestined to be a great scholar. She wanted to send him to a certain "select preparatory school" kept by two elderly maiden sisters of undoubted gentility. Their prospectus informed the gentry of the neighbourhood that special attention was given by the Misses Warmington to manners and the cultivation of correct behaviour.

His father had no use for the Misses Warmington—had done business with them in connection with a boiler. He mimicked the elder Miss Warmington's high-pitched voice. They would teach the boy monkey-tricks, give him ideas above his station. What was wrong with the parish school, only two streets away, where he would mix with his own class and not be looked down upon?

His mother did not agree that he would be with his own class among the children of the neighbourhood. The Strong'nth'arms had once been almost gentry. He would learn coarse ways, rude speech, acquire a vulgar accent. She carried her way, as she always did in the end. Dressed in her best

clothes, and accompanied by Anthony in a new turn-out from head to foot, she knocked at the door of the Misses Warmington's "select preparatory school."

It was one of a square of small, old-fashioned houses that had once been on the outskirts of Millsborough, but which now formed a connecting link between the old town and the maze of new mean streets that had crept towards it from the west. They were shown into the drawing-room. The portrait of a military gentleman with a wooden face and stars upon his breast hung above the marble mantelpiece. On the opposite wall, above the green rep sofa, hung a frightened-looking lady with ringlets and fingers that tapered almost to a point.

Mrs. Strong'nth'arm sat on the extreme edge of a horsehair-covered chair and had difficulty in not sliding off it on to the floor. Anthony John, perched on another precisely similar chair, had mastered the problem by sitting well back and tucking one leg underneath him.

After a few minutes there entered the elder Miss Warmington. She was a tall gaunt lady with a prominent arched nose. She apologized to Mrs. Strong'nth'arm for having kept them waiting, but apparently did not see Mrs. Strong'nth'arm's out-

stretched hand. For a time his mother didn't seem to know what to do with it.

She explained her errand, becoming almost voluble on the importance both she and his father attached to manners and a knowledge of the ways of gentlefolks.

Miss Warmington was sympathetic; but, alas! the Miss Warmingtons' select preparatory school for gentlefolks had already its full complement of pupils. Mrs. Strong'nth'arm, not understanding the hint, referred to rumours that tended to refute this argument. It seemed needful there should be plain speaking. The Misses Warmington themselves were very sorry, but there were parents who had to be considered. Particularly was it a preparatory school for young ladies and gentlemen. A pupil from the neighbourhood of Platt Lane—the child of a mechanic—no doubt a most excellent——

Mrs. Strong'nth'arm interrupted. An engineer, employing workmen of his own.

The elder Miss Warmington was pleased to hear it. But there was no getting over the neighbourhood of Platt Lane. And Mrs. Strong'nth'arm herself, the child's mother. Miss Warmington had not the slightest intention of being offensive. Domestic service Miss Warmington had always

held to be a calling worthy of all esteem. It was the parents.

Miss Warmington rose to end the interview. And then by chance her eyes fell upon Anthony John as he sat with one small leg tucked underneath the other.

The tears were in Mrs. Strong'nth'arm's eyes, and she did not notice. But Anthony saw quite plainly the expression that came over the tired, lined face of the elder Miss Warmington. He had seen it before on faces that had suddenly caught sight of him.

"You say your husband employs work-people?" she said in a changed tone, turning to Mrs. Strong-'nth'arm.

"A man and a boy," declared Mrs. Strong'nth'-arm in a broken voice. She dared not look up because of the tears in her eyes.

"Would you like to be one of our little pupils?" asked the elder Miss Warmington of Anthony John.

"No, thank you," he answered. He did not move, but he was still looking at her, and he saw the flush upon her face and the quiver of her tall gaunt frame.

"Good afternoon," said Miss Warmington as she rang the bell. "I hope you'll find a school to suit you."

Mrs. Strong'nth'arm would much have liked to make a cutting answer and have swept out of the room. But correct behaviour once acquired becomes a second nature. So, instead, Mrs. Strong-'nth'arm curtsied and apologised for her intrusion, and taking Anthony John by the hand, departed with bowed head.

In the street primeval instinct reasserted itself. She denounced the Misses Warmington as snobs. Not that it mattered. Anthony John should be a gentleman in spite of them. And when he had got on and was rich they would pass the Miss Warmingtons in the street and take no notice of them, just as though they were dirt. She hoped they would live long enough. And then suddenly her anger turned against Anthony John.

"What did you mean by saying 'No, thank you' when she asked you if you'd like to come?" she demanded. "I believe she'd have taken you if you'd said yes."

"I didn't want her to," explained Anthony. "She isn't clever. I'd rather learn from someone clever."

With improved financial outlook the Strong'nth'arms had entered the Church of England. When you were poor it didn't matter; nobody minded what religion you belonged to; church or chapel,

you crept into the free seats at the back and no one turned their eyes to look. But employers of labour who might even one day be gentlefolks! The question had to be considered from more points of view than one.

Mr. Strong'nth'arm's people had always been chapel folk; and as his wife had often bitterly remarked, much good it had done him. Her own inclination was towards the established church as being more respectable; and arguing that the rent of a side pew was now within their means, she had gained her point. For himself Mr. Strong'nth'arm was indifferent. Hope had revived within him. He was busy on a new invention and Sunday was the only day now on which he had leisure and the workshop to himself. Anthony would have loved to have been there helping, but his mother explained to him that one had to think of the future. A little boy, spotlessly clean and neatly dressed, always to be seen at church with his mother, was the sort of little boy that people liked and, when the time came, were willing to help.

A case in point, proving the usefulness of the church, occurred over this very problem of Anthony's education. Mrs. Strong'nth'arm called on the vicar and explained to him her trouble. The vicar saw a way out. One of the senior pupils

at the grammar school was seeking evening employment. His mother, a widow, possessed of nothing but a small pension, had lately died. Unless he could earn sufficient to keep him he would have to discontinue his studies. A clever lad; the vicar could recommend him. Mrs. Strong'nth'arm was gratitude personified. The vicar was only too pleased. It was helping two birds with one stone. It sounded wrong to the vicar even as he said it. But then so many things the vicar said sounded wrong to him afterwards.

The business was concluded that same evening. Mr. Emanuel Tetteridge became engaged for two hours a day to teach Anthony the rudiments of learning, and by Mrs. Strong'nth'arm was generally referred to as "our little Anthony's tutor." He was a nervous, silent youth. The walls of his bed-sitting-room, to which when the din of hammers in the workshop proved disturbing he would bear little Anthony away, was papered with texts and mottoes, prominent among which one read: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." The preparatory education of Anthony proceeded by leaps and bounds. The child was eager to learn.

Between the two an odd friendship grew up founded upon a mutual respect and admiration.

Young Tetteridge was clever. The vicar had spoken more truly than he knew. He had a clever way of putting things that made them at once plain and easy to be remembered. He could make up poetry—quite clever poetry that sometimes made you laugh and at other times stirred something within you which you didn't understand but which made you feel grand and all aglow. He drew pictures—clever pictures of fascinating never-to-be-seen things that almost frightened you, of funny faces, and things that made you cry. He made music out of a thing that looked like a fiddle, but was better than a fiddle, that he kept in a little black box; and when he played you wanted to dance and sing and shout.

But it was not the cleverness that Anthony envied. That would have been fatal to their friendship. He never could answer satisfactorily when Anthony would question him as to what he was going to be—what he was going to do with all his cleverness. He hadn't made up his mind, he wasn't quite sure. Sometimes he thought he would be a poet, at other times a musician or an artist, or go in for politics and be a statesman.

"Which are you going to begin with when you leave school?" demanded Anthony. They had been studying in young Tetteridge's bed-sitting-

room and the lesson was over. Anthony's eyes were fixed upon a motto over the washstand:

> "One thing at a time, and that done well,
> Is a very good rule, as many can tell."

Young Tetteridge admitted that the time was approaching when the point would have to be considered.

Anthony was sitting on his hands, swinging his legs. Young Tetteridge was walking up and down; owing to the size of the room being ten by twelve it was a walk with many turns.

"You see," explained Anthony, "you're not a gentlefolk."

Mr. Tetteridge claimed that he was, though personally attaching no importance to the fact. His father had been an Indian official. His mother, had she wished, could have claimed descent from one of the most renowned of Irish kings.

"What I mean," explained Anthony, "is that you've got to work for your living."

Mr. Tetteridge argued that he could live on very little. He was living just then on twelve shillings a week, picked up one way and another.

"But when you're married and have children?" suggested Anthony.

Mr. Tetteridge flushed, and his eyes instinctively

turned to a small photograph on the mantelpiece. It featured a pretty dolly-faced girl, the daughter of one of the masters at the grammar school.

"You haven't got any friends, have you?" asked Anthony.

Mr. Tetteridge shook his head. "I don't think so," he answered.

"Couldn't you keep a school?" suggested Anthony, "for little boys and girls whose mothers don't like them going to the parish school and who ain't good enough for the Miss Warmingtons? There's heaps of new people always coming here. And you're so clever at teaching."

Mr. Tetteridge, halting suddenly, stretched out his hand; and Anthony, taking his from underneath him, they shook.

"Thanks awfully," said Mr. Tetteridge. "Do you know I'd never thought of that."

"I shouldn't say anything about it if I was you," counselled Anthony, "or somebody else might slip in and do it before you were ready."

"We say, 'if I were you'; not 'if I was you,' " Mr. Tetteridge corrected him. "We'll take the subjunctive mood tomorrow. It's quite easy to remember."

Again he stretched out his hand. "It's awfully good of you," he said.

"I'd like you not to go away from Millsborough," answered Anthony.

The period of prosperity following the visit of Wandering Peter had lasted all but two years. It came to an end with the death of his father. It was while working on his new invention that the accident had happened.

He was alone in the workshop one evening after supper; and while hoisting a heavy iron bar the rope had broken and the bar had fallen upon him and crushed his skull. He lingered for a day or two, mostly unconscious. It was a few hours before the end that Anthony, who had been sent upstairs by his mother to see if anything had happened, found his father with his eyes wide open. The man made a sign to him to close the door. The boy did so and then came and stood beside the bed.

"There won't be anything left, sonny," his father whispered. "I've been a fool. Everything I could get or borrow I put into it. It would have been all right, of course, if I had lived and could have finished it. Your mother doesn't know, as yet. Break it to her after I'm gone, d'you mind. I haven't the pluck."

Anthony promised. There seemed to be more that his father wanted to say. He lay staring at

the child with a foolish smile about his loose, weak mouth. Anthony sat on the edge of the bed and waited. He put his hand on the boy's thigh.

"I wish I could say samething to you," he whispered. "You know what I mean: something that you could treasure up and that would be of help to you. I've always wanted to. When you used to ask questions and I was short with you, it was because I couldn't answer them. I used to lie awake at night and try to think them out. And then I thought that when I came to die something might happen, that perhaps I'd have a vision or something of that sort—they say that people do, you know—that would make it all plain to me and that I'd be able to tell you. But it hasn't come. I suppose I ain't the right sort. It all seems dark to me."

His mind wandered, and after a few incoherent words he closed his eyes again. He did not regain consciousness.

Anthony broke it to his mother—about everything having been sacrificed to the latest new invention.

"Lord love the man!" she answered. "Did he think I didn't know? We were just a pair of us. I persuaded myself it was going to pan out all right this time."

They were standing by the bedside. His mother had been up to the great house and had brought back with her a fine wreath of white flowers. They lay upon the sheet just over his breast. Anthony hardly knew his father; the weak, twitching lips were closed and formed a firm, strong line. Apart from the mouth his face had always been beautiful; though, lined with fret and worry and the fair hair grimy and uncombed, few had ever noticed it. His mother stooped and kissed the high pale brow.

"He is like what I remember him at the beginning," she said. "You can see that he was a gentleman, every inch of him."

His mother looked younger standing there beside her dead man. A softness had come into her face.

"You did your best, my dear," she said, "and I guess I wasn't much help to you."

Everybody spoke well of the white, handsome man who lay with closed eyes and folded hands as if saying his prayers. Anthony had no idea that his father had been so universally liked and respected.

"Was father any relation to Mr. Selwyn?" he asked his mother the evening of the funeral.

"Relation!" answered his mother. "Not that I ever heard of. Why, what makes you ask?"

"He called him 'brother,' " explained Anthony.

"Oh, that," answered his mother. "Oh, that doesn't mean that he really was his brother. It's just a way of speaking of the dead."

CHAPTER V

THEY moved into a yet smaller house in a yet meaner street. His mother had always been clever with her needle. A card in the front window gave notice that Mrs. Strong'nth'-arm, dressmaker and milliner, was willing to make up ladies' own materials and guaranteed both style and fit. Mill hands and miners' wives and daughters supplied her clientêle. When things were going well orders were sufficient to keep Mrs. Strong'nth'arm's sewing machine buzzing and clacking from morn till night.

There were periods, of course, when work was slack and bills remained unpaid. But on the whole there was enough to just keep and clothe them. It was the problem of Anthony's education that troubled them both.

And here again it was the Church that came to their rescue. The pious founder of St. Aldys' Grammar School had decreed "Foundation Scholarships" enabling twelve poor boys belonging to the faith to be educated free, selection being in the hands of the governors. Sir William Coomber happened to be one, the Vicar another. Young

Tetteridge, overcoming his shyness, canvassed the remainder, taking Anthony with him. There was anxiety, alternation of hope and fear. In the end victory. Anthony, subjected to preliminary examination, was deemed sufficiently advanced for the third form. Sir William Coomber wrote him a note, the handwriting somewhat shaky, telling him to serve God and honour the Queen and be a blessing to his mother. And if ever there was anything that Sir William could do for him to help him he was to let Sir William know. The Vicar shook hands with him and wished him godspeed, adding incidentally that heaven helps those that help themselves. The headmaster received him in his study and was sure they were going to be friends. Young Tetteridge gave a cold collation in his honour, to which the head of the third form, the captain of the second division of the football team and three gentlemen of the upper sixth were invited. The captain of the second division of the football team examined his legs and tested his wind and expressed satisfaction. Jarvis, of the upper sixth, made a speech in his honour, quite a kindly speech, though it did rather suggest God Almighty to a promising black beetle; and Anthony was called upon to reply.

Excess of diffidence had never been his failing.

It never was to be. He said he was glad he was going to be in the third form, because he did like Billy Saunders very much indeed. And he was glad that Mr. Williamson thought he'd be all right in time for football, because he thought it a jolly game and wanted to play it awfully, if Mr. Williamson would help him and tell him what to do. And, he thought it awfully kind of Mr. Jarvis and Mr. Harrocks and Mr. Andrews to take notice of a little boy like he was; and he hoped that when he got into the upper sixth he'd be like them. And he was awfully bucked up at being one of the St. Aldys boys, because he thought it must be the finest school in all the world, and it was awfully ripping of Mr. Tetteridge to have got him into it. And then he sat down and everybody said "Bravo!" and banged the table, and Mr. Jarvis said it wasn't half bad for a young 'un.

"Did I do all right?" he asked young Tetteridge after the others had gone.

"Splendiferous," answered young Tetteridge, putting an affectionate arm around him. "You said something about all of them."

"Yes; I thought they'd like that," said Anthony.

He discovered that other sentiments than kindliness go to the making of a school. It leaked out that he was a "cropped head." The founder—

maybe for hygienic reasons—had stipulated that his twelve free scholars should wear their hair cut close. The custom had fallen into disuetude, but the name still clung to them. By the time they had reached the upper division they had come to be tolerated. But the early stages were made hard for them. Anthony was dubbed "Pauper," "Charity boy." On the bench the boys right and left of him would draw away so that they might not touch him. In the playground he was left severely to himself. That he was quick and clever at his lessons and that the masters liked him worked still further to his disadvantage. At first young Saunders stuck up for him, but finding this made him a sharer of Anthony's unpopularity soon dropped him, throwing the blame upon Anthony.

"You see it isn't only your having come in on the 'Foundation,'" he explained one day to Anthony, having beckoned him aside to a quiet corner behind a water-butt. "You ought to have told me your mother was a dressmaker."

"So is young Harringay's mother," argued Anthony.

"Yes; but she keeps a big shop and employs girls to do the sewing," explained Saunders. "Your mother lives in Snelling's Row and works with her

own hands. You ought to have told me. It wasn't fair."

Ever since he could remember there had been cropping up things that Anthony could not understand. In his earlier days he had worried about these matters and had asked questions concerning them. But never had he succeeded in getting a helpful answer. As a consequence he had unconsciously become a philosopher. The wise traveller coming to an unknown country accepts what he finds there and makes the best of it.

"Sorry," replied Anthony, and left it at that.

One day in the playground a boy pointed at him. He was standing with a little group watching the cricket.

"His mother goes out charing," the boy shouted.

Anthony stole a glance at the boy without making any sign of resentment. As a matter of fact his mother did occasionally go out charing on days when there was no demand for her needle. He was a lithe, muscular-looking lad some three inches taller than Anthony.

"Ain't you going to fight him?" suggested a small boy near by with a hopeful grin upon his face.

"Not yet," answered Anthony, and resumed his interest in the game.

There was an old crony of his uncle's, an ex-prize fighter. To this man Anthony made appeal. Mr. Dobb was in a quandary. Moved by Mrs. Newt's warnings and exhortations, he had lately taken up religion and was now running a small public-house in one of the many mining villages adjoining Millsborough.

"It's agin 'the Book,'" he answered. "Fighting's wrong. 'Whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek turn to him the other also.' Haven't tried that, have you?"

"He hasn't done it," explained Anthony. "He called my mother a charwoman. They're always on to me, shouting after me 'pauper' and 'charity boy.'"

"Damn shame," murmured Mr. Dobb forgetfully.

"There's something inside me," explained Anthony, "that makes me want to kill them and never mind what happens to me afterwards. It's that that I'm afraid of. If I could just give one or two of them a good licking it would stop it."

Mr. Dobb scratched his head. "Wish you'd come to me a year ago, my lad," he said, "before your aunt got me to promise to read a chapter of the Bible every night before I went to sleep." He looked down at Anthony with an approving pro-

fessional eye. "You've got the shoulders, and your neck might have been made for it. Your reach couldn't be better for your height. And all you need is another inch round your wind. In a couple of months I could have turned you out equal to anything up to six stun seven."

"But the Bible tells us to fight," argued Anthony. "Yes, it does," he persisted in reply to Mr. Dobb's stare of incredulity. "It was God who told Saul to slay all the Amalekites. It was God who taught David to fight, David says so himself. He helped him to fight Goliath."

Mrs. Newt, having regard to Mr. Dobb's age, had advised him to read the New Testament first. He had just completed the Acts.

"Are you quite sure?" demanded Mr. Dobb.

Anthony found chapter and verse and read them to him.

"Well, this beats me into a cocked hat," was Mr. Dobb's comment. "Seems to me to be a case of paying your money and taking your choice."

Mr. Dobb's scruples being thus laid at rest, he threw himself into the training of Anthony with the enthusiasm of an artist. Anthony promised not to fight till Mr. Dobb gave his consent, and for the rest of the term bore his purgatory in silence. On the last day of the vacation Mr. Dobb pronounced him

fit; and on the next morning Anthony set off hopeful of an early opportunity to teach his persecutors forbearance. They were interfering with his work. He wanted to be done with them. To his disappointment no chance occurred that day. A few of the customary jibes were hurled at him; they came, unfortunately, from boys too small to be of any use as an example.

But on his way home the next afternoon he saw, to his delight, young Penlove and Mowbray, of the lower fourth, turn up a quiet road that led through a little copse to the bathing place. Penlove was the boy who had called his mother a charwoman. Young Mowbray belonged to the swells; his father was the leading solicitor of Millsborough. He was a quiet, amiable youth with soft eyes and a pink and white complexion.

Anthony followed them, and when they reached the edge of the copse he ran and overtook them. It was not a good day for bathing, there being a chill east wind, and nobody else was in sight.

They heard Anthony behind them and turned.

"Coming for a swim?" asked young Mowbray pleasantly.

"Not today, thank you," answered Anthony. "It's Penlove I wanted to speak to. It won't take very long."

Penlove was looking at him with a puzzled expression. Anthony was an inch taller than when Penlove had noticed him last.

"What is it?" he demanded.

"You called my mother a charwoman last term," answered Anthony. "She does go out cleaning when she can't get anything else to do. I think it fine of her. She wouldn't do it if it wasn't for me. But you meant it as an insult, didn't you?"

"Well," answered young Penlove, "what if I did?" He guessed what was coming, and somehow felt doubtful of the result notwithstanding the two years difference between them.

"I want you to say that you're sorry and promise never to do it again," answered Anthony.

It had to be gone through. Young Penlove girded his loins—to be exact, shortened his belt by a couple of holes and determined to acquit himself like an English schoolboy. Young Mowbray stepped to the end of the copse for the purpose of keeping cave.

It was a short fight, for which young Mowbray, who always felt a little sick on these occasions, was glad. Penlove was outclassed from the beginning. After the third round he held up his hand and gave Anthony best. Anthony helped him to rise, and

seeing he was still groggy, propped him up against a tree.

"Never mind saying you're sorry," he suggested. "Leave me and my mother alone for the future, that's all I want." He held out his hand.

Young Mowbray had returned.

"Shake hands with him," he advised Penlove. "You were in the wrong. Show your pluck by acknowledging it."

Penlove shook hands. "Sorry," he said. "We have been beastly to you. Take my tip and don't stand any more of it."

The story of the fight got about. Penlove had to account for his changed appearance, and did so frankly. Genuine respect was the leading sentiment he now entertained towards Anthony.

It was shared by almost the entire third class, the only criticism directed against Anthony being for his selection of time and place. The fight ought to have been arranged for a Friday afternoon behind the pavilion, when all things might have been ordered according to ancient custom. That error could and must be rectified. Penlove's account of Anthony's prowess might have been exaggerated to excuse his own defeat. Norcop, a hefty youngster and the pride of the lower fourth, might have given a different account. Anthony, on his way home

two days later, was overtaken in a quiet street by young Mowbray.

"You'll have to fight Norcop next Friday week," he told Anthony. "If you lick him there's to be an end of it, and you're to be left alone. I thought I'd let you know in time."

Mowbray lived at the Priory, an old Georgian house with a big garden the other end of the town. He had come far out of his way.

"It's awfully kind of you," said Anthony.

"I hope you'll win," said Mowbray. "I'm a Socialist. I think it rubbish all this difference between the classes. I think we're all equal, and so does my sister. She's awfully well read."

Anthony was not paying much attention. His mind was occupied with the ordeal before him.

"He's rather good, isn't he, Harry Norcop?" he asked.

"That's why they're putting him up," answered Mowbray. "It's a rotten silly idea. It's the way that pack of wolves settle their differences. And the wolf that goes down all the others turn away from and try to make it worse for the poor begger. We're just the same. If you get licked on Friday you'll be persecuted worse than ever. There's no sense in it."

Anthony looked round at him. It was new sort of talk, this. Young Mowbray flushed.

"I wonder if you could get to like me," he said. "I liked you so for what you said to Penlove about your thinking it fine of your mother to go out cleaning. I haven't got any friends among the boys; not real ones. They think me a muff."

"I don't," answered Anthony. "I think you talk awfully interestingly. I'd like tremendously to be friends."

Mowbray flushed again, with pleasure this time. "Won't keep you now," he said. "I do hope you'll win."

Anthony never left more than he could help to chance. For the next week all his spare time was passed in the company of Mr. Dobb, who took upon himself the duties not only of instructor but of trainer.

On the following Friday afternoon Anthony stepped into the ring with feelings of pleasurable anticipation.

"Don't you go in feeling angry or savage," had been Mr. Dobb's parting instruction. "Nothing interferes with a man's wind more than getting mad. Just walk into him as if you loved him and were doing it for the glory of God."

The chorus of opinion afterwards was that it had

been a pretty fight. That Norcop had done his best and that no disgrace attached to him. And that Strong'nth'arm was quite the best man for his years and weight that St. Aldys had produced so far back as the oldest boy could remember. The monitors shook hands with him, and the smaller fry crowded round him and contended for his notice. From ostracism he passed in half an hour to the leadership of the third class. It seemed a curious way of gaining honour and affection. Anthony made a note of it.

This principle that if a thing had to be done no pains should be spared towards the doing of it well he applied with equal thoroughness to the playing of his games. For lessons in football and cricket he exchanged lessons in boxing. Cricket he did not care for. With practice at the nets it was easy enough to become a good batsman; but fielding was tiresome. There was too much hanging about, too much depending upon other people. Football appealed to him. It was swift and ceaseless. He loved the manœuvring, the subterfuge, the seeming yielding, till the moment came for the sudden rush. He loved the fierce scrimmage, when he could let himself go, putting out all his strength.

But it was not for the sake of the game that he

played. Through sport lay the quickest road to popularity. Class distinctions did not count. You made friends that might be useful. One never knew.

His mother found it more and more difficult to make both ends meet. If she should fail before he was ready! Year by year Millsborough increased in numbers and in wealth. On the slopes above the town new, fine houses were being built. Her mill owners and her manufacturers, her coal-masters and her traders, with all their followers and their retainers, waxed richer and more prosperous. And along the low-lying land, beside the foul, black Wyndbeck, spread year by year new miles of mean, drab streets; and the life of her poor grew viler and more cursed.

St. Aldys' Grammar School stood on the northern edge of the old town. Anthony's way home led him through Hill Terrace. From the highest point one looks down on two worlds: old Millsborough, small and picturesque, with its pleasant ways and its green spaces, and beyond its fine new houses with their gardens and its tree-lined roads winding upward to the moor; on the other hand, new Millsborough, vast, hideous, deathlike in its awful monotony.

The boy would stop sometimes, and a wild terror

would seize him lest all his efforts should prove futile and in that living grave he should be compelled to rot and die.

To escape from it, to "get on," at any cost! Nothing else mattered.

CHAPTER VI

AN idea occurred to Anthony. The more he turned it over in his mind the more it promised. Young Tetteridge had entered upon his last term. The time would soon come for the carrying out of Anthony's suggestion that in some mean street of Millsborough he should set up a school for the sons of the ambitious poor.

Why should not one house do for them both? To Mr. Tetteridge for his classroom and study the ground floor; to his mother for her dressmaking and millinery the floor above; the three attics for bedrooms; in the basement the common dining-room and kitchen. There were whole streets of such houses, with steps up to the front door and a bow window. Mr. Tetteridge would want someone to look after him, to "do for" him. Whom more capable, more conscientious than Mrs. Strong-'nth'arm? The gain would be mutual. His mother would be working for better-off customers. She could put up her prices. Mr. Tetteridge would save in rent and board.

Mr. Tetteridge was quite carried away by the brilliance and simplicity of the proposal.

"And there will be you and your dear mother always there," he concluded. "It is so long since I had a home."

To his mother the rise from Snelling's Row to Bridlington Street was a great event. It brought tears of happiness to her eyes. Also she approved of Mr. Tetteridge.

"It will be so good for you," she said to Anthony, "living with a gentleman."

There was the furnishing. Mr. Tetteridge's study, into which parents would have to be shown, must breathe culture, dignified scholasticism. Mr. Tetteridge's account at Her Majesty's savings bank was a little over twenty pounds. That must not be touched. Sickness, the unexpected, must be guarded against. Anthony went to see his aunt. That with the Lord's help she had laid by a fair-sized nest-egg she had in a rash moment of spiritual exaltation confided to him. Loans of half a sovereign, and even of a five-pound note, amply secured and bearing interest at the rate of a shilling in the pound per week, she was always prepared to entertain. Anthony wanted a hundred pounds at ten per cent. per annum, to be repaid on the honour of a gentleman.

The principal required frightened her almost into a fit. Besides she hadn't got it. The rate of

interest, which according to complicated calculations of her own worked out at considerably less than halfpenny a pound per week, did not tempt her. About the proposed security there seemed to her a weakness.

In years to come the things without a chance that Anthony Strong'nth'arm pulled off, the impracticable schemes that with a wave of his hand became sound business propositions, the hopeless enterprises into which he threw himself and carried through to victory, grew to be the wonder and bewilderment of Millsborough. But never in all his career was he called upon again to face such an absolutely impossible stone waller as his aunt's determination on that Friday afternoon not to be bamboozled out of hard-won savings by any imp of Satan, even if for her sins he happened to be her own nephew.

How he did it Mrs. Newt was never able to explain. It was not what he said, though heaven knows there was no lack of that. Mrs. Newt's opinion was that by words alone he could have got it out of a stone. It was some strange magic he seemed to possess that made her—to use her own simile—as clay in the hands of the potter.

She gave him that one hundred pounds in twenty five-pound notes, thanking God from the bottom of

her heart that he hadn't asked for two. In exchange he drew from his pocket, and pressed into her hand a piece of paper. What it was about and what she had done with it she never knew. She remembered there was a stamp on it.

She also remembered, when she came to her senses, that he had put his arms about her and had hugged her, and that she had kissed him good-bye and had given him a message to his mother. At the end of the first twelve months he brought her thirty pounds, explaining to her that that left eighty still owing. And what astonished her most was that she wasn't surprised. It was just as if she had expected it.

The pupils came in. Mrs. Strong'nth'arm, knowing many folk, was of much help.

Mrs. Strong'nth'arm's idea had been to call upon some half a dozen likely parents, to appeal to them for their support of a most deserving case: a young would-be schoolmaster of whose character and ability she could not speak too highly.

"And they'll tell you it's very kind of you to try and assist the poor young gentleman, but that as regards their own particular progeny they've decided to send him somewhere else," explained Anthony.

"How do you know?" argued his mother.

"Why, Mrs. Glenny, the china shop woman, was telling me only a month ago how worried she was about her boy, not knowing where to send him."

"You drop in on Mrs. Glenny," counselled Anthony, "and talk about the weather and how the price of everything is going up. And as you're coming away just mention casually how everybody is talking about this new school that Mr. Tetteridge has just started; and how everybody is trying to get their boys into it; and how they won't be able to, seeing that young Tetteridge has told you that he can only receive a limited number; and how you've promised Mrs. Herring to use your influence with Tetteridge in favour of her boy Tom. Leave Mrs. Glenny to do the rest."

People had a habit of asking Anthony his age; and when he told them they would look at him very hard and say: "Are you quite sure?"

His uncle was taken ill late in the year. He had caught rheumatic fever getting himself wet through on the moors. He made a boast of never wearing an overcoat. Anthony found him sitting up in bed. A carpenter friend had fixed him up a pulley from the ceiling by which he could raise himself with his hands. Old Simon was sitting watching him, his chin upon the bed. Simon had been suffering

himself from rheumatism during the last two winters and seemed to understand.

"Don't tell your aunt," he said. "She'll have them all praying round me and I'll get no peace. But I've got a feeling it's the end. I'm hoping to slip off on the quiet, like."

Anthony asked if he could do anything. He had always liked his uncle; they felt there was a secret bond between them.

"Look after the old chap," his uncle answered; "that is if I go first."

He stretched out a stiff arm and laid it on old Simon's head. "Ninety years old he'll be on the fourteenth," he said, "reckoning six years of a dog's life as equal to one of a man's. And I'm sixty-five. We haven't done so badly, either of us."

Anthony drew up a chair and sat down between the two.

"Nothing you want to talk about, is there?" he asked. The old man knew what he meant. He shook his head.

"Been talking about it or listening to it, on and off, pretty well all my life," he answered. "Never got any further."

He was silent a while, wrestling with his pain.

"Of course, I believe in a God," he said. "There must be Somebody bossing it all. It's the things they tell you about Him that I've never been able to swallow. Don't fit in with common sense to my thinking."

"You're not afraid?" Anthony asked him after a silence.

"Why should I be?" answered the old man. "He knows me. He ain't expecting anything wonderful. If I'm any good maybe He'll find me a job. If not——"

Old Simon had crept closer. They were looking into each other's eyes.

"Wonder if there'll be any dogs?" he said. "Don't see why there shouldn't. If love and faithfulness and self-forgetfulness are going to be of any use to Him, what's wrong with you, old chap?"

He laughed. "Don't tell your aunt I said that," he cautioned Anthony. "She's worried enough about me, poor old girl, as it is."

His aunt had looked for a death-bed repentance, but the end came before she expected it, in the night.

"He wasn't really a bad man," she said, crying. "That's what made me hope, right to the end, that the Truth would be revealed to him."

Anthony sought to comfort her. "Perhaps it came to him when he was alone," he said.

She clung to that.

The burying of him was another trouble. She had secured the site she had always wished for herself beneath the willow. She would have liked him to be laid there beside her, but his views and opinions had been too well known to her people. They did not want him among them. There was a neglected corner of the big cemetery set apart for such as he; but to lay him there would be to abandon hope. The Lord would never venture there. Anthony suggested the Church. He undertook to interview the vicar, a kindly old gentleman, who possibly would ask no questions.

He found the vicar in the vestry. There had been a meeting of the churchwardens. The Reverend Mr. Sheepskin was a chubby, blue-eyed gentleman. He had heard of Anthony's uncle. "A very hard nut to crack," so the vicar had been given to understand.

"But was always willing to listen, I gathered," added the vicar. "So perhaps the fault was ours. We didn't go about it the right way."

Something moved Anthony to tell the vicar what his uncle had once said to him when he was a child about the world being a very different place if

people really did believe all that they say they believe.

He wished he hadn't said it, for the old gentleman sat silent for what seemed quite a long time.

"What did they answer him?" he asked at length. "Did he tell you?"

"He said they never did answer him that," replied Anthony.

The vicar looked at him across the green baize.

"There isn't any answer," he said. "Your uncle had us there.

"I dreamed of it once." The light was fading; maybe he forgot that young Anthony was sitting there over against him in the shadows. "Living for Christ, taking no thought of aught else. What ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink or wherewithal ye shall be clothed. It's a big thing—Believing."

He seemed to have become aware again of the boy sitting there half hidden by the shadows.

"Most of us, Strong'nth'arm," he said, "think that all we've got to do is to sing about it, to repeat it in the proper places. It isn't enough. Take up thy cross and follow me. That's where the trouble begins. Easy enough to worship it with folded hands. It is taking it up, carrying it with bowed head and aching shoulders, that's the bother of it."

He rose, pushing back his chair with a grating sound upon the uncarpeted floor.

"You see," he said, "it isn't only oneself. One might do it if one were alone. The Roman Church is right on that point. And yet it doesn't work, even with them. The world gets hold of them. What's the date?" he said suddenly.

"December the fifth," Anthony told him.

"Just three weeks to Christmas." He was walking up and down the bare cold room. He halted a few steps in front of the lad. "Do you know what Christmas means to me? You will later on. Bills. Butcher's bills, baker's bills, bootmaker's bills—there's something uncanny about the number of boots that children seem to want. And then there's their school bills and their doctor's bills and the Christmas boxes and the presents. It's funny when you come to think of it. Christ's birthday. And I've come to dread it. What were we all talking about this afternoon here in the vestry? How to help Christ? How to spread His gospel? No, pew rates, tithes, clergy relief funds, curates' salaries, gas bills, fund for central heating and general repairs!

"How can I preach Christ, the Outcast, the Beggar, the Wanderer in the Wilderness, the Servant of the poor, the Carrier of the Cross? That's

what I started out to preach. They'd only laugh at me. 'He lives in a big house,' they would say; 'keeps four servants'—when one can get them—'and his sons go to college.' God knows it's struggle enough to do it. But I oughtn't to be struggling to do it. I ought to be down among the people, teaching Christ not only by my words but my life."

It had grown dark. The vicar, stumbling against a small side table, brought it down with a clatter. Anthony found the matches and lit the gas. The vicar held out a plump hand.

"It'll be all right about your uncle," he said. "See Mr. Grant and arrange things with him."

Anthony thanked him and was leaving. The Reverend Mr. Sheepskin drew him back. "Don't judge me too hardly," he said with a smile. "Leastways, not till you've lived a bit longer. Something made me talk without thinking. If anything I've said comes back to you at any time, listen to it. It may have been a better sermon than I usually preach."

His aunt was much comforted when he told her.

"I shouldn't be surprised," she said, "if he got through after all. Anyhow, we've done our best for him."

Old Simon had returned to the railway carriage.

He seemed to know that all was over. He lingered for a little while, but there was no heart in him. And one morning they found him dead.

A friendship had grown up between Anthony and young Mowbray. It had been chiefly of Edward Mowbray's seeking, but Anthony had been attracted by Edward's gentleness and kindness. Mowbray's father had also taken a liking to him and he came to be a frequent visitor at The Priory.

Mr. Mowbray was a fine, handsome gentleman of about fifty, fonder of pleasure than of business it was said. He rode to hounds and prided himself on being one of the best shots in the county. He was a widower. Gossip whispered of an unhappy marriage, for the lady—of neglect and infidelities. But this may not have been true, for Mr. Mowbray always spoke of his wife with enthusiasm, and often tears would come into his eyes. Her portrait by Orchardson hung in the dining-room facing Mr. Mowbray's chair: an arresting face, though hardly beautiful, the forehead being too high and narrow. It was in the eyes that the attraction lay. They seemed almost to speak. Mr. Mowbray, during a lull in the conversation, would sometimes raise his glass and drink to her in silence. He was fond of his fine old port, and so were most of his many friends. There were only two children, Edward

and his sister Elizabeth. She was the elder by a couple of years. She had her mother's haunting eyes, but the face as a whole was less striking. Anthony had been rather afraid of her at first, and she had not taken much notice of him. She was considered eccentric by reason of her not taking any interest in games and amusements. In this both children were a strange contrast to their father. She would have been dubbed a "high brow" in later years; "blue stocking" was the name then.

It was by Edward and his sister that Anthony was introduced to politics. They were ardent reformers. They dreamed of a world in which there would be no more poor. They thought it might be brought about in their time, at least so far as England was concerned. Edward was the more impatient of the two. He thought it would have to come by revolution. Elizabeth (or Betty as she was generally called for short) had once been of the same opinion. But she was changing. She pointed out the futility of the French Revolution. And even had there been excuse for it the need no longer existed. All could be done now through the ballot box. Leaders must arise, men wise and noble. The people would vote for them. Laws must be passed. The evil and the selfish com-

pelled to amend their ways. The rotten houses must be pulled down; pleasant, well-planned habitations take their place, so that the poor might live decently and learn the meaning of "home." Work must be found for all; the haunting terror of unemployment be lifted from their lives. It easily could be done. There was work waiting, more than enough, if only the world were properly ordered. Fair wages must be paid, carrying with them a margin for small comforts, recreation. The children must be educated so that in time the poor would be lifted up and the wall between the classes levelled down. Leaders were the one thing needful: if rich and powerful so much the better: men who would fight for the right and never sheathe the sword till they had won justice for the people.

They were tramping the moors. The wind had compelled her to take off her hat and carry it and had put colour into her cheeks. Anthony thought she looked very handsome with her fine eyes flashing beneath their level brows.

In their talk they had lost their tracks and were making a bee line for the descent. A stream barred their way. It babbled over stones and round the roots of trees. Edward picked her up to carry her across, but at the margin hesitated, doubting his muscles.

"You'll be safer with Anthony," he said, putting her down.

"It's all right," she said. "I don't mind getting my feet wet." But Anthony had already lifted her in his arms.

"You're sure I'm not too heavy?" she asked.

He laughed and stepped down with her into the stream.

He carried her some distance beyond the bank, explaining that the ground was still marshy. He liked the pressure of her weight upon his breast.

CHAPTER VII

IT was the evening previous to young Mowbray's departure for Oxford. Betty was going with him to help him furnish his rooms. They would have a few days together before term began, and she wanted to see Oxford. Anthony had come to say good-bye. Mr. Mowbray was at a dinner given by the mayor, and the three young people had been left to themselves. Betty had gone into the servants' quarters to give some orders. The old housekeeper had died the year before and Betty had taken over the entire charge. They were sitting in the library. The great drawing-room was used only when there was company.

"Look in now and again when I am away," said Edward. "Betty hasn't many friends and she likes talking to you."

"And I like talking to her tremendously," answered Anthony. "But, I say, will it be proper?"

"Oh, what rot," answered Edward. "You're not that sort, either of you. Besides, things are different to what they used to be. Why shouldn't there be just friendship between men and women?"

Betty entered as he finished speaking, and the case was put to her.

"Yes, I shall be sorry to miss our talks," she said. She turned to Anthony with a smile. "How old are you?" she asked.

"Sixteen," he answered.

She was surprised. "I thought you were older," she said.

"Sixteen last birthday," he persisted. "People have always taken me for older than I am. Mother used to have terrible fights with the tram conductors; they would have I was nearer five than three. She thought quite seriously of sewing a copy of my birth certificate inside my cap." He laughed.

"You're only a boy," said Betty. "I'm nearly nineteen. Yes, come and see me sometimes."

Edward expected to be at Oxford three years. After that he would return to Millsborough and enter his father's office. Mowbray and Cousins was the name of the firm, but Cousins had long passed out of it, and eventually the whole business would belong to Edward.

"Why don't you go in for the Remingham Scholarship?" he said suddenly, turning to Anthony, "and join me next year at Oxford. You could win it hands down; and as for funds to help

you out, my father would see to that, I know, if I asked him. He thinks tremendously well of you. Do, for my sake."

Anthony shook his head. "I have thought about it," he said. "I'm afraid."

Edward stared at him. "What on earth is there to be afraid of?" he demanded.

"I'm afraid of myself," answered Anthony. "Nobody thinks it of me, I know; but I'd end by being a dreamer if I let myself go. My father had it in him. That's why he never got on. If I went to Oxford and got wandering about all those old colleges and gardens I wouldn't be able to help myself. I'd end by being a mere student. I've had to fight against it even here, as it is."

Edward and Betty were both listening to him, suddenly interested. The girl was leaning forward with her chin upon her hand. Anthony rose and walked to the window. The curtains had not been drawn. He looked down upon the glare of Millsborough fading into darkness where the mean streets mingled with the sodden fields.

"You don't understand what it means," he said. "Poverty, fear—all your life one long struggle for bare existence."

He turned and faced the softly-lighted room with its carved ceiling and fine Adams mantel-

piece, its Chippendale furniture, its choice pictures and old Persian rugs.

Everything about you mean and ugly," he continued. "Everybody looking down upon you, patronizing you. I want to get out of it. Learning isn't going to help me. At best, what would I be without money or influence to start me? A schoolmaster—a curate, perhaps, on eighty pounds a year. Business is my only chance. I'm good at that. I feel I could be. Planning, organizing, getting people to see things your way, making them do things. It's just like fighting, only you use your brains instead of your hands. I'm always thinking about things that could be done that would be good for every one. I mean to do them one day. My father used to invent machines and other people stole them from him, and kept all the profit for themselves. They're not going to do that with me. They shall have their share, but I——" He stopped and flushed scarlet.

"I'm awfully sorry," he said. "I've got into a way of talking to myself. I forgot I was here."

Betty had risen. "I think you are quite right," she said. "And when you've got on you'll think of those who live always in poverty and fear. You'll know all about them and the way to help them. You will help them, won't you?"

She spoke gravely. She might have been presenting a petition to the Prime Minister.

"Of course I will," he said. "I mean to."

She rang the bell and ordered coffee and cakes.

While they were munching she sprung it upon them that she was going to buy a bicycle. A new design had just been invented with two low wheels of equal size. It could be made so that a lady could ride it.

Edward was just a little shocked. Betty had the reputation as it was of being a bit eccentric. She went long walks by herself in thick boots and rarely wore gloves. This would make her still more talked about. Betty thought she would be doing good. As the daughter of one of the leading men in Millsborough she could afford to defy the conventions and open the way for others. Girls employed in the mills, who now only saw their people twice a year, would be able to run home for week-ends, would be able to enjoy rides into the country on half-holidays. Revolutions always came from the top. The girls would call after her at first, she fully expected. Later they would be heartened to follow her example.

Her difficulty was learning. She proposed to go up to the moors early in the morning where she could struggle with the thing unseen. But at first

one wanted assistance and support. There was the gardener's boy. But she feared he was weak about the knees.

"I wish you'd let me come," said Anthony. "I like a walk in the early morning. It freshens my brain for the day."

"Thank you," she answered. "I was really thinking of you, but I didn't like to ask in case it might interfere with your work."

She promised to let him know when the bicycle arrived. He might like to come round and have a look at it.

It was with something of a pang that he said good-bye to Edward, though it would be less than three months before they would meet again. He had not made many friends at the school; he was too self-centered. Young Mowbray was the only boy for whom he felt any real affection.

Tetteridge's "Preparatory and Commercial School" had prospered beyond expectation. In the language of the advertisement it supplied a long-felt want. "The gentry" of Millsborough—to be exact, its better-off shopkeepers, its higher-salaried clerks and minor professionals—were catered for to excess. But among its skilled workmen and mechanics, earning good wages, were many ambitious for their children. Education was

in the air; feared by most of the upper classes as likely to be the beginning of red ruin and the breaking up of laws; regarded by the more thoughtful of the workers, with extravagant hopes, as being the sure road to the Promised Land. Tetteridge had a natural genius for teaching; he had a way of making the work interesting. The boys liked him and talked about him and the things he told them. It became clear that the house in Bridlington Street would soon be too small for his needs.

"It sounds nonsensical, I know," said Mr. Tetteridge; "but there are times when I wish that I hadn't been so sensible."

"What have you been doing sensible?" laughed Anthony.

"When I followed your most excellent and youthful advice, Tony, and started this confounded school," explained Mr. Tetteridge.

"What's wrong with it?" asked Anthony.

"Success," replied Mr. Tetteridge. "It's going to grow. I shall end in a big square house with boarders and assistant masters and prayers at eight o'clock. I shall dress in a black frock-coat and wear a chimney-pot hat. I shall have to. The parents will expect it."

"There'll be holidays," suggested Anthony,

"when you'll be able to go walking tours in knickerbockers and a tweed cap."

"No, I sha'n't," said Mr. Tetteridge. "I shall be a married man. There'll be children, most likely. We shall go for a month to the seaside and listen to niggers. The children will clamour for it. I shall never escape from children all my life, and I'll never get away from Millsborough. I shall die here, an honoured and respected citizen of Millsborough. Do you know what my plan was? I'd worked it all out? Wandering about the world like Oliver Goldsmith, with my fiddle. Earning my living while I tramped, sleeping under the stars or in some village inn, listening to the talk and stories; making sketches of odd characters, quaint scenes and places; sitting by the wayside making poetry. Do you know, Tony, I believe I could have been a poet—could have left a name behind me."

"You'll have your evenings," argued Anthony. "They'll all go at four o'clock. You can write your poetry between tea and supper."

" 'To Irene of the Ringlets,' " suggested Tetteridge. " 'God and the Grasshopper,' 'Ode to Idleness.' What do you think the parents would say? Besides, they don't come between tea and

supper. They come in the mental arithmetic hour. I kick 'em out and slam the door. They never come again."

Anthony's face expressed trouble. Something within him enabled him to understand. Tetteridge laughed.

"It's all right," he said. He took the photograph of the science master's daughter from the mantelpiece and kissed it. "I'm going to marry the dearest little girl in all the world, and we're going to get on and be very happy. Who knows? Perhaps we may keep our carriage."

He replaced the latest photograph of Miss Seaton on the mantelpiece. She wasn't as dolly-faced as she had been. The mouth had grown firmer, and the look of wonder in the eyes had gone. She suggested rather a capable young woman.

He had left to Anthony the search for new premises. Anthony was still undecided when something unexpected happened. The younger Miss Warmington, after a brief illness, died. Mrs. Plumberry had nursed her, and at Anthony's request consented to call at 15 Bruton Square and find out how the land lay. It would be the very thing It had two large class-rooms built out into the garden. Mrs. Plumberry was a born diplo-

matist. She reported that Miss Warmington, now absolutely alone in the world, had cried a little on Mrs. Plumberry's motherly shoulder; had confided to Mrs. Plumberry that the school had been going down for some time past; that she had neither the heart nor the means to continue it. Mrs. Plumberry's advice to her had been that she should get rid of the remainder of her lease, if possible, and thus avoid liability regarding covenants for reparation. Miss Warmington had expressed the thankfulness with which she would do this, that is if a purchaser could be found; and Mrs. Plumberry, though not holding out much hope, had promised to look about her.

Thus it came to pass that once again Mrs. Strong-'nth'arm and Anthony were ushered into the drawing-room of 15 Bruton Square and rested on its horse-hair-covered chairs. But this time Mrs. Strong'nth'arm sat well back; and it was Miss Warmington who, on entering, held out her hand. Mrs. Strong'nth'arm, imagining beforehand, had intended not to see, but second nature again was too strong. Miss Warmington, though old and feeble, was still impressive, and Mrs. Strong'nth'arm curtsied and apologized for intrusion.

Miss Warmington smiled as she shook hands with Anthony.

"You were a little boy when I saw you last," she said, "and you sat with your leg tucked under you."

"And he wouldn't come to your school when you asked him to," interposed Mrs. Strong'nth'arm. She had made up her mind to get that out.

Miss Warmington flushed. "I think he was very wise," she said. "I hear quite wonderful accounts of him." Anthony had closed the door and placed a chair for her. "And I see he has learned manners," she added with another smile.

Anthony laughed. "I was very rude," he admitted, "and you are a very kind lady to forgive me."

The business, so far as Miss Warmington was concerned, was soon finished. She wondered afterwards why she had accepted Anthony's offer without even putting up a fight. It was considerably less than the sum she had determined to stand out for. But on all points, save the main issue, he had yielded to her; and it had seemed to her at the time that she was getting her own way. They had kept up the fiction of the business being between Mrs. Strong'nth'arm and Miss Warmington, Anthony explaining always that it was his mother who was prepared to do so and so—his mother, alas! who was unable to do the other, Mrs. Strong-

'nth'arm confirming with a nod or a murmur.

Over a friendly cup of tea letters were exchanged then and there, thus enabling Mrs. Strong-'nth'arm to dismiss all thought of other houses that had been offered her. Mrs. Strong'nth'arm undertook to pay Miss Warmington three hundred pounds and to take over Miss Warmington's lease with all its covenants, together with all fixtures and such furniture as Miss Warmington would not require for her own small needs.

"And where the money's to come from I suppose you know," commented Mrs. Strong'nth'arm, as the door of 15 Bruton Square closed behind them. "Blessed if I do!"

Anthony laughed. "That'll be all right, mother," he said. "Don't you worry."

"To hear him!" murmured his mother, addressing the darkening sky above her. "Talking about three hundred pounds to be paid next Tuesday week and laughing about it! Ah! if your poor father had only had your head."

He explained to his aunt that this time there would be good security and that in consequence she was going to get only five per cent. She tried to make him say seven, more from general principle than with any hope of success. But he only laughed. By degrees he had constituted himself

her man of business; and under his guidance her savings had rapidly increased. To Mrs. Newt a successful speculation proved that God was behind you. She had come to regard her nephew with reverence, as being evidently in the Lord's counsels.

He had a further proposition to put before her. The dogs had long ago been sold, and the old railway carriage had fallen into ruin. The tumble-down cottage, in which his aunt now lived alone, was threatening to follow its example; but the land on which it stood had grown in value. The price he felt sure he could get for it made her open her eyes. The cottage disposed of, she could come and live with them at Bruton Square, paying, of course, for her board and lodging. The sum he suggested per week made her open her eyes still wider. But he promised she should be comfortable and well looked after. Again she made a feeble effort to touch his heart, but he only kissed her and told her that he would see to everything and that she wasn't to worry. Forty years—all but—she had dwelt in Prospect Cottage, Moor End Lane. She had been married from the Jolly Cricketers, and after a day's honeymoon by the sea Joe had brought her there and never a night since then had she slept away from it. There had been fields about it in

those days. She dratted the boy more than once or twice as she poked about the tiny rooms, selecting the few articles she intended to keep. But she was ready on the appointed day. She had purchased gloves and a new bonnet. One must needs be dressy for Bruton Square.

Anthony had two rooms at the top of the house, one for his bedroom and the other for his study. He had always been fond of reading. His favourite books were histories and memoirs. Emerson and Montaigne he had chosen for himself as prizes. His fiction was confined to "Gulliver's Travels." There were also Smiles' "Self-Help," "From Log-Cabin to White House," Franklin's "Autobiography," and the "Life of Abraham Lincoln."

His mother had given up the dressmaking business. Young Tetteridge had brought home his bride, and keeping house for five people, even with help, took up all her time. Often of an evening she would bring her sewing and sit with Anthony while he worked.

It was towards the end of the Michaelmas term; Anthony was in the lower sixth. He had determined to leave at Christmas. The upper sixth spent all its time on the classics which would be useless to him.

"What do you think of doing when you do leave?" asked his mother. "Have you made up your mind?'

"Go into old Mowbray's office if he'll have me," answered Anthony.

"Edward will put in a word for you there, won't he?" suggested his mother.

"Yes. I'm reckoning on that," he answered.

Anthony turned again to his book, but his mother's needle lay idle.

"The girl's friendly too, isn't she?" she asked. "They say she can't express a wish that he doesn't grant her."

Anthony did not answer. He seemed not to have heard. His mother's thimble rolled to the floor. Anthony recovered it and gave it to her.

"What's she like?" his mother asked him.

"Oh, all right," he answered, "a nice enough girl."

"She's older than you, isn't she?" said his mother.

"Yes; I think she is," said Anthony. "Not much."

"Tom Cripps was up on the moor the other morning." His mother had resumed her sewing. "Poaching, I expect. He saw you both there. He's a rare one to gossip. Will it matter?"

Anthony laid down his book. "Was father in love with you when he married you?" he asked.

His mother looked up astonished. "What an odd question to ask," she said. "Of course he was. Madly in love. Some said I was the prettiest girl in Millsborough—not counting, of course, the gentry. What makes you ask?"

Instead of answering he asked her another.

"What do you mean by madly in love?"

His mother was smiling to herself. The little grey head was at a higher angle than usual.

"Oh, you know," she said. "Walked six miles there and back every evening just to get five minutes' talk with me. Said he'd drown himself if I didn't marry him. And was that jealous—why, I daren't so much as speak to anything else in trousers. Wrote poetry to me. Only silly like, one day when I was mad with him, I burnt it."

He did not answer. She stole a glance at him. And suddenly it came to her what was in his mind.

"It never lasts," she said. "I've often thought as folks would be better without it." She chatted on, keeping a corner of her eye upon him. "Young Tetteridge was in love up to his ears when he first came to us. That marriage isn't going to turn out trumps. So was Ted Mowbray—the old man, I

mean—— Worshipped the very ground she trod on. Everybody talked about it. Didn't prevent his gallivanting off wherever his fancy took him before they'd been married three years. Guess she wished he'd been less hot at first. Might have kept warm a little longer." She laughed. "Some one you like and feel you can get on with, and that you know is fond of you; that's the thing that wears and makes for the most happiness. And if she's got a bit of money or can help you in other ways—well, there ain't no harm in that." She stopped to thread a needle. "Ain't ever had a fancy, have you?" she asked.

"No," he answered. "That's what's troubling me. I suppose I'm too young."

His mother shook her head. "You're too level-headed, lad," she said. "You'll never make a fool of yourself; for that's what it means, generally speaking. You'll marry with your eyes open; and she'll be a lucky woman, because you ain't the sort to blow hot and cold and repent of a thing after you've done it. That's what breaks a woman's heart."

She gathered together her work and rose.

"Don't get sitting up too late," she said. "Don't do to burn the candle at both ends."

She was bending down over him. She paused a moment with his head between her hands.

"I suppose you know how handsome you are," she said.

She kissed him and went out.

CHAPTER VIII

THEY were walking on the moor. It was a Wednesday afternoon. Betty was on the way to one of her numerous pensioners, a bed-ridden old labourer who lived in what had once been a gamekeeper's cottage on the edge of a wood, with a granddaughter to keep house for him, a handsome, wild-looking girl of about sixteen.

"What are you going to do when you leave school?" Betty asked suddenly. Since the discovery that she was two years older than Anthony she had adopted towards him a motherly attitude. She had laid it aside while she was learning to ride the bicycle. Anthony's early mechanical training had given him a general knowledge of adjustments and repairs. He had assumed the position of instructor, and had spoken in tones of authority. Feeling her safety dependent upon his strength and agility, compelled so often to call to him for help, to cling to him for support, she had been docile and apologetic. But the interlude ended, she had resumed her airs of superiority.

"Oughtn't you to be thinking about it?" she added.

"I have been thinking about it," he explained. "My difficulty is that I've no one to advise me, not now Sir William Coomber's dead."

"Why don't you have a talk with father?" she suggested.

"I did think of that too," he said with a laugh. "But it seems so cheeky."

"How would you like to go into his office?" she asked after a silence.

"Do you think he would?" he answered eagerly.

"I'll sound him about it," she said.

They had reached the path leading to the gamekeeper's cottage. Anthony had vaulted over the stile. He had turned and was facing her.

"You are a brick," he said.

He was looking up at her; she was standing on the cross-bar of the stile. She smiled and held out her hand for him to help her. She had beautiful hands. They were cool and firm, though in consequence of her habit of not wearing gloves, less white and smooth than those of other girls in her position.

He took it, and bending over it kissed it. Neither spoke again till they reached the old man's cottage.

It was a week later that he received a note from Mr. Mowbray asking him to come to dinner. He

found Mr. Mowbray alone. Betty had gone to a party at one of the neighbours. Mr. Mowbray put him next to him on his right, and they talked during the meal. Mowbray asked him questions about his school career and then about his father.

"Funny," he said, "we were turning out some old papers the other day. Came across your grandfather's marriage settlement. I suppose you know that the Strong'nth'arms were quite important folk a hundred years ago."

Anthony had heard about them chiefly from his mother. His father had had no use for them.

Mr. Mowbray was sipping his port.

"My grandfather was a tailor in Sheffield," he volunteered. He could afford to remember his grandfather. His father had entertained George IV, and his mother had been a personal friend of Queen Caroline. He himself might have been an aristocrat of the first water if manners and appearances stood for lineage.

"I shouldn't have suspected it, sir," said Anthony. He was looking at Mr. Mowbray with genuine admiration. Their eyes met and Mr. Mowbray laughed, well pleased.

"Don't you mention that to Betty," he said. "She hates to be reminded of it. I tease her about

it sometimes when she gets on her high horse and starts riding roughshod over all the social conventions. I tell her it's her bourgeois blood coming out in her. He was an awful Radical. It always stops her."

He lit a cigar and pushed back his chair. Anthony did not smoke.

"And now to come to business," he said. "What are you going to do when you leave school?"

"I thought of trying to get into an office," answered Anthony.

"Any particular sort of an office?" demanded Mr. Mowbray.

"Yes, sir," answered Anthony. "Yours, if you'll have me."

Mr. Mowbray was regarding him through half-closed eyes.

"You want to be a business-man? You feel that's your *métier?* So Betty tells me."

Anthony flushed. "I hope she didn't tell you all I said," he laughed. "It was the night I came in to say good-bye to Edward. I got excited and talked without thinking. But I do think it's my best chance," he continued. "I like business. It seems to me like a fine game of skill that calls for all your wits, and there is enough danger in it to make it absorbing."

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Mr. Mowbray nodded. "You've got the right idea," he said. "You've almost repeated word for word a speech I once heard my father make. It was he who first thought of coal in the valley and took the risk of getting all the land between Donniston and Copley into his own hands before a sod was turned. He'd have died a pauper if his instinct had proved wrong.

"We could do with a few more like him in Millsborough," he went on. "Lord! The big things that are waiting to be done. I used to think about them. If it wasn't for the croaking old fools that get in your way and haven't eyes to see the sun at midday! It would take the patience of Job and the labours of Hercules to move them." He poured himself out another glass of port and sipped it for a while in silence.

"What's your idea of a salary?" he suddenly asked. "Supposing I did find an opening for you."

Anthony looked at him. He was still sipping his port. Anthony had the conviction that Mr. Mowbray would, if the figure were left to him, suggest a hundred a year. He could not explain why. Maybe some forgotten talk with Edward had left this impression on his mind, or maybe it was pure guess work.

"Eighty pounds a year, sir, I was thinking of, to begin with," he answered.

The firm of Mowbray and Cousins acted for most of the older inhabitants of Millsborough, and Mrs. Newt was amongst them. Mr. Mowbray had had one or two interviews with Anthony in connection with his aunt's affairs and had formed a high opinion of his acumen and shrewdness. The price he had just got his aunt for her bit of land in Moor End Lane, and the way he had played one would-be purchaser against another had, in particular, suggested to Mr. Mowbray's thinking a touch of genius.

"We'll say a hundred," said Mr. Mowbray, "to begin with. What happens afterwards will depend upon yourself."

"It's awfully kind of you, sir," said Anthony. "I won't try to thank you—in words."

He had been sure that Mr. Mowbray would insist upon his own figure. Mr. Mowbray liked doing fine, generous things that commanded admiration. But he was really grateful.

Mr. Mowbray had risen. He laid a kindly hand on Anthony's shoulder.

"I should like you to get on and be helpful to me," he said. "Edward's a dreamer, as you know.

I should like to think there would be always someone capable and reliable to give him a hand."

Edward had not returned home for the midsummer vacation. Betty had met him in London and they had made an extended tour on the Continent. Anthony had not seen him for over a year when they met a few days before Christmas. He looked ill. Oxford did not agree with him; he found it enervating, but he thought he would get acclimatized. He had been surprised at Anthony's having been eager to enter his father's office. From their talks he had gathered that Anthony was bent upon becoming a business man. He had expected him to try for a place in one of the great steel works or a manufacturer's office

"Your grandfather didn't make his money out of being a solicitor," explained Anthony. "Your father was telling me only the other day; it was he who set going all the new schemes; they were his idea. He got together the money for them and controlled them. You see, being the leading solicitor of Millsborough, he was in touch with the right people and knew all that was going on behind the scenes. Millsborough was only a little place then, compared to what it is now. If your father"—he checked himself and changed the words that had

been upon his lips—"cared to take the trouble he could be a millionaire before he died."

"I'm glad he doesn't," laughed Edward. "I hate millionaires."

Betty was with them. They were returning home from a walk upon the moors. Edward had clamoured for wind. According to him you wouldn't get it in Oxford. It was twilight, and they had reached the point where Millsborough lay stretched out before them.

"It depends upon what use you make of it," Betty chimed in. "Money is a weapon. You can use it for conquering, winning more and more for yourself; or you can use it for freeing the chained, protecting the weak, fighting for the oppressed."

"Oh, yes; I know the theory," replied Edward. "Robin Hood. You take it from the rich and give it to the poor. But Robin Hood must first feast with his followers; that's only fair. And must put by a bit for a rainy day; that's only common prudence. And then Little John puts in his claims, and dear old Friar Tuck. Mustn't forget Friar Tuck or the blessing of God won't be with us next time. And Maid Marion must have a new kirtle and a ribbon or two to tie up her bonny brown hair. And one or two things Robin wants for himself.

By the time it's all over there's nothing left for the poor."

Anthony laughed. But Betty took it seriously.

"You dream of the future," she said to her brother. "I want to help the people now. A rich man—especially if he were a good business man—could lay the foundations of a new world here in Millsborough tomorrow. He wouldn't have to wait for other people. He could build healthy pleasant houses for the workers. I'm not thinking of charity. That's why I want the business man who would go to work sensibly and economically; turn them out at rents that the people could afford. I know it can be done. I've gone into it. He could build them clubs to take the place of the public-houses where they could meet each other, read and talk, play games, have concerts and dances. Why shouldn't there be a theatre? Look at the money they spend on drink. It's just to get away from their wretched homes. Offer them something worth having—something they'd really like and enjoy, and they'd spend their money on that. I wouldn't have anything started that couldn't be made to pay its own way in the long run. If it can't do that it isn't real. It isn't going to last. He could open shops, sell food and clothes to the people at fair prices; could start factories

that would pay decent wages and where the hands would share in the profits. It's no use kind, well-meaning people attempting these things that don't understand business. They make a muddle of it; and then everybody points to it and says, 'See what a failure it was!' It isn't the dreamers—the theorists—that will change the world. Life's a business; it wants the business man to put it right. He hasn't got to wait for revolutions, nor even for Parliaments. He can take the world as it is, shape it to fine ends with the tools that are already in his hands. One day one of them will rise up and show the way. It just wants a big man to set it going, that's all."

They had reached the outskirts of the town, where their ways parted. Anthony had promised his mother to be home to tea. The Tetteridges were away; and she was giving a party in the drawing-room to some poor folks who had been her neighbours in Snelling's Row. Edward was a few steps ahead. Betty held out her hand. She was trembling and seemed as if she would fall. Anthony put an arm round her and held her up.

"How strong you are," she said.

The office of Mowbray and Cousins occupied a high, square, red brick house in the centre of the

town facing the church. Anthony was given a desk in the vestibule leading to Mr. Mowbray's private room on the first floor, with its three high, dome-topped windows. It seemed that Mr. Mowbray intended to employ him rather as a private secretary than a clerk. He kept Mr. Mowbray's papers in order, reminded him of his appointments, wrote such letters as Mr. Mowbray chose to answer himself. Mr. Mowbray had never taken kindly to dictating; he was too impatient. Anthony, with the help of the letter book, soon learned the trick of elaborating his brief instructions into proper form. It was always Anthony that Mr. Mowbray selected to accompany him on outside business; to see that the bag contained all necessary documents; to look up trains; arrange things generally. Mr. Mowbray himself had a distaste for detail. It was plain to Anthony, notwithstanding his inexperience, that his position was unique. He was prepared for jealousy; but for some reason that at first he did not grasp Mr. Mowbray's favouritism was regarded throughout the office as in the natural order of things. Even old Abraham Johnson, the head clerk, who had the reputation of being somewhat of a tyrant, was friendly to him from the beginning. It was assumed as a matter of course that he was

studying for the law and would later on take out his articles.

"I meant to do so when I first entered the office," old Mr. Johnson said to him one day. They were walking home together. Mr. Johnson also resided in Bruton Square. He was a bachelor and lived with an unmarried sister. "Forty-three years ago that was, in the first Mr. Mowbray's time. But office hours were longer then; and when I got home I was pretty tired. And what with one thing and another—— Besides, I hadn't your incentive."

He laughed, and seemed to expect Anthony to understand the joke.

"Come to me," he added, "if you get tied up at any time. I expect I'll be able to help you."

They were all quite right. He was studying for the law. But it surprised him they should all assume it as a matter of course.

He had intended telling Edward himself and asking his help. But Edward anticipated him.

"I'm glad you're with the Gov'nor," he said. It was a day or two before his return to Oxford. He had come to the office with messages from his father, who was in bed with a headache. "I should have suggested it myself if I'd known you were looking at it that way. And Betty's pleased," he added. "She thinks it is good for the dad, that

you will steady him." He laughed. "And now that you have begun I want you to peg away and take out your articles. I'll write out all you've got to do and leave it with Betty if I don't see you again. And if there are any books you want that you can't find in the office, let me know, and I'll send them to you."

"Right you are," said Anthony. "I'll go ahead. The only thing that worries me is that you're all of you making it so easy for me. It's spoiling my character." He looked up with a smile. Edward was sitting on a corner of his father's desk swinging his legs. "You've been a ripping friend to me ever since you first spoke to me in Bull Lane, the day I fought young Penlove." He spoke with an emotion unusual to him.

Edward flushed. "There are only two people I really care for," he said, "you and Betty. But it isn't only of you I'm thinking. If I come into the business it'll be jolly our being together. And if not——" He paused.

"What do you mean?" asked Anthony. "You're not thinking of chucking it? Your father's reckoning on you. That's why he's never taken a partner; he told me so."

"Of course I shall come into it," Edward answered, "bar accidents."

He was looking out of the window. Anthony followed his gaze, but the cold grey square was empty save for a couple of cabs that stood there on the rank.

"But what could happen?" persisted Anthony.

"Oh, nothing," Edward answered. "It's only another way of saying '*Deo volente.*' It used to be added to all public proclamations once upon a time. We're not as pious as we were." He took up his hat and stick and held out his hand. "Don't forget about the books," he said. "They're expensive to buy, and I've done with most of them."

Anthony thanked him and they shook hands. They never met again.

CHAPTER IX

IT was just before Easter that Edward wrote his father and Betty that he had developed diabetes and was going for a few weeks to a nursing home at Malvern. The doctor hoped that with care he would soon be much better. In any case he should return to Oxford sometime during the summer term. He expected to be done with it by Christmas.

To Anthony he wrote a different letter. The doctor had, of course, talked cheerfully; it was the business of a doctor to hold out hope; but he had the feeling himself that his chance was a poor one. He should return to Oxford, if the doctor did not absolutely forbid it, for Betty's sake. He did not want to alarm her. And, of course, he might pull through. If not, his idea was that Anthony should push on with his studies at high speed and become as soon as possible a junior partner in the firm. It was evident from his letter that he and Betty were in agreement on this matter and that she was preparing the way with her father. Mr. Mowbray's appetite for old port was increasing. He was paying less and less attention to the business. It

would soon need some one to pull it together again.

"Betty likes you, I know," he wrote, "and thinks no end of you. I used to dream of you and she marrying; and when the doctor told me, my first idea was to write to you both and urge it; it seemed to me you were so fitted for one another. But then it came to me that we are strangers to one another, even to our nearest and dearest; we do not know what is in one another's hearts. I feared you might think it your duty and might do it out of mere gratitude or even from some lesser motive. I know that in any case you would be true and good and kind; and a little while ago I should have deemed that sufficient. But now I am not sure. It may be that love is the only thing of importance, and that to think we can do without it is to imagine that we can do without God. You will be surprised at my writing in this strain, but ever since I began to think I seem to have been trying to discover a meaning in life; and it seems to me that without God it is all meaningless and stupid. But by feeling that we are part of God and knowing we shall always be with Him, working for Him, that then it all becomes interesting and quite exciting. And the thing we've got to keep on learning is to love, because that is the great secret. Forgive me for being prosy, but I have nothing else to do just now

but walk about the hills and think. If you and Betty should get to care for one another, and I should come to hear of it, I shall be tremendously delighted. But in any case I know you will take my place and look after her. People think her the embodiment of capability and common sense. And so she is where others are concerned. But when it comes to managing for herself she's a duffer."

He added that he would write again and keep Anthony informed, so that before the end they could have some talk together.

Anthony read the letter again. His friendship with Edward meant more to him than he had thought. It was as if a part of himself were being torn away from him, and the pain that he felt surprised him. Evidently he was less self-centred, less independent of others than he had deemed himself. Outwardly his life would go on as before. He would scheme, manœuvre, fight and conquer. But there was that other Anthony, known only to himself, of whom even he himself had been aware only dimly and at intervals: Anthony the dreamer. It seemed that he too had been growing up, that he too had hopes, desires. He it was who had lost his friend and would not be comforted. And almost it seemed as if from his sorrow he had

gained strength. For as time went by this Anthony, the dreamer, came more often, even interfering sometimes with business.

He would have liked to have gone over to Malvern and have seen Edward. Betty was there. But he was wanted in the office. So often Mr. Mowbray had one of his headaches and did not care to leave the house, and then it was always Anthony he would send for, and they would work in the library. And of late he had taken to absenting himself for days at a time, being called away, as he would explain, upon private affairs. And to Anthony alone he would confide his address, in case it was "absolutely necessary" for him to be recalled. Anthony had his suspicions where these journeys ended. He was worried. Betty had returned from Malvern, Edward having assured her that he was much better. Anthony, looking at the matter from all sides, came to the conclusion that he ought to tell her. It was bound to come out sooner or later.

Betty was not surprised.

"It's what I've been fearing," she said. "It was Ted that kept him straight. He's always been a good father to both of us. He wanted Ted to succeed to a sound business; but now this blow has come he doesn't seem to care."

"But Ted is going to succeed to it," replied Anthony without looking up.

"I wish you could persuade him of that," she said. "I've tried; but I only make him excited. He says it's God's punishment on him for his sins and apparently argues from that that he may just as well go on sinning. If Ted could get well enough to come home, if only for a few days, it might make all the difference."

"Don't you think he could?" suggested Anthony.

"Not to Millsborough," she answered. She glanced out of the window at the everlasting smoke that was rolling slowly up the valley towards the sea. "I wanted him to take The Abbey—Sir William Coomber's old place up on the moor—it is still to let. But this woman seems to have got firmly hold of him at last. My fear is that she'll marry him. Poor dad! He's such a kid."

"Has he known her long?" asked Anthony.

"She was our governess when Ted and I were children," Betty answered. "She was a pretty woman, but I always hated her. It was instinct, I suppose. She married soon after she left us, and went back to France, but returned to London when her husband died about six years ago. I'd rather anything than that he should marry her. To see

her sleeping in mother's room! I couldn't stand that. I should——"

She stopped abruptly. She was trembling.

"I don't think there's any fear of that," said Anthony. "He still loves your mother. I'm not talking merely to please you. It's the best thing about him. And he loves you. He'd think of all that."

"He didn't think of it when she lived," Betty answered.

They were in the long dining-room and had just finished dinner. Mr. Mowbray had telegraphed that he was coming home that evening and would want to see Anthony. But he had not yet arrived. She was looking at the portrait of her mother over the great mantel-piece.

"If ever I marry," she said, "I shall pray God to send me a man who will like me and think of me as a good friend and comrade."

They neither spoke for a while.

"It was a love-match on both sides, between your father and your mother, wasn't it?" asked Anthony.

"No woman ever had a more perfect lover, so my mother told me," she answered with a curious laugh. "For the first five years. I remember waking in the night. My mother was kneeling by my bed with her head buried in her arms. I didn't

understand. I supposed it was something grown up people did. I went to sleep again; and when I opened my eyes again it was dawn. She was still there. I called to her, and she raised her head and looked at me. It was such a strange face. I didn't know it was my mother."

Anthony looked at the picture. Betty was growing more like her every day.

"I wonder if we would be better without it," he said. "All the great love stories of the world: they've all been tragedies. Even the people round about us whom we know; it always seems to end in a muddle. Is every man bound to go through it?" he added with a laugh. "Or could a man keep out of it, do you think?"

"I think a strong man might," she answered. "It's weak men that make the best lovers."

"There have been strong men who have loved," suggested Anthony.

"Yes," she admitted. "Those are the great love stories that end in tragedy."

There came the sound of carriage wheels.

"I expect that's dad," she said.

She had risen. Passing, she lightly laid her hand on him.

"Don't ever fall in love," she said. "It would spoil you."

Mr. Mowbray had aged of late, but with his white, waving hair and fine features was still a handsome man. Old-fashioned clients, shaking their heads, had gone elsewhere. But new business had come to the firm. Anthony had taken his employer for a walk one summer's evening along the river's bank, and had talked him into the idea of turning Millsborough into a seaport town. "It could be done, with money." The river could be widened, deepened; locks could be built. The traffic from the valley that now went north or south could be retained for Millsborough. The marvel was that nobody had ever thought of it before.

"We've all been asleep here for the last quarter of a century," Mr Mowbray said, laying his arm affectionately on Anthony's shoulder. "You'll wake us up."

Engineers had been consulted and had sent in their reports. The scheme was practicable; Mowbray and Cousins was still a name to conjure with in business circles. The enterprise had been launched, had forced its way by its sheer merit. Not only could a handsome dividend be safely reckoned on; it would be of enormous benefit to Millsborough as a whole.

"Mowbray's coming back," they said in Millsborough.

Anthony's share was to be a junior partnership. It was Mr. Mowbray who was the more impatient. Anthony promised to be through before the long vacation.

"If dear Ted comes back," said Mr. Mowbray, "he'll be glad to find you here. If God is hard on me for my sins we must make our fortune for Betty's sake."

Edward had gone to Switzerland for the summer. Anthony had hoped to see him before he went, but examinations had interfered; and Edward himself had been more hopeful. He had written that in spite of all he felt he was going to live. His mind was getting lighter. He was forming plans for the future. And then suddenly there had come a three-word telegram:

"I want Betty."

Mr. Mowbray was away when it came. He had gone, without saying a word to any one, the day before, and had not as usual left Anthony any address. He did not return until the end of the week, and then it was all over. Betty had wired that she was bringing the body back with her. Mr. Mowbray broke down completely when Anthony told him, throwing himself upon his knees and sobbing like a child.

"Betty will hate me," he moaned through his

tears, "and it will serve me right. I seem to do nothing but hurt those I love. I loved my wife and I broke her heart. There is no health in me."

Edward was buried in St. Aldys' Churchyard beside his mother. Anthony had seen the ex-governess and made all things clear to her. Mr. Mowbray seemed inclined to settle down to business a reformed character. Anthony had taken out his articles and had been admitted into partnership. though the firm would still remain Mowbray and Cousins.

It was an evening in late September. Mr. Mowbray and Betty had gone abroad. Anthony, leaving the office earlier than usual, climbed the hill to the moors. He took the road he had climbed with his mother when he was a child and had thought he was going to see God. He could see the vision of his own stout little legs pounding away in front of him and his mother's stooping back and her short silk jacket, remnant of better days, that she had always worn on these occasions. If his aunt's theories were correct, then surely the Lord must have approved of him and of all his ways from his youth upwards. At school, in the beginning, he had put himself out to make a friend of Edward Mowbray, foreseeing the possible advantages. So also with Betty. He had tried to make her like

him. It had not been easy at first, but he had studied her. The love for Edward that had come to him had been an aftergrowth. It belonged to Anthony the dreamer rather than to the real Anthony.

With Betty also he had succeeded. She liked him, cared for him. That she did not love him he was glad. If she had loved him he would have hesitated, deeming it an unfair bargain. As it was, he could with a clear conscience ask her to be his wife. And she would consent; he had no doubt of that. Old Mr. Mowbray would welcome the match. He was reckoning on it as assuring Betty's future. Anthony would succeed to the business, and behind him there would be the old man's money to help forward the plans with which his brain was teeming for the benefit of Millsborough and himself. The memory of what Edward had written him about love came back to him. But Edward had always been a dreamer. Life was a business. One got on better by keeping love and religion out of it. He and Betty liked each other. They would get on together. Her political enthusiasms did not frighten him. All that would be in his own hands. When success had arrived—when his schemes had matured and had brought him wealth and power—then it would be time enough to ven-

ture on experiments. Prudently planned, they need not involve much risk. They would bring him fame, honour. To the successful business man all prizes were within reach.

His walk had brought him to The Abbey, now untenanted. The fancy that one day it might be his home had often come to him. His mother had been a parlourmaid there. He pictured the perfect joy that it would give her to sit in its yellow drawing-room and reach out her hand to ring the bell.

He passed through the rose garden. Betty would love the rose garden. Roses she had made her hobby. But the air of Millsborough did not suit them. Here they were still wonderful in spite of neglect. He made a mental note to speak about it to Hobbs, the gardener. He knew what the answer would be. Twice that summer Hobbs had walked down to Millsborough with a tale of despair; and twice Anthony had written to Sir Harry Coomber. But what was a penurious baronet to do? Would Mowbray and Cousins never succeed in finding him a tenant? And so on. Anthony determined to provided Hobbs with help on his own responsibility. The rose garden, even if everything else had to go, must be preserved.

He passed on to the flower garden. It had always been Hobbs' special pride. It had been well cared for and was now a blaze of colour. It lay between two old grey walls that had once enclosed the cloisters; and beyond one saw the great cedars that had been brought and planted there by Herbert de Combles on his return from the Crusades.

A yew hedge in which there was a wicket gate separated the two gardens. He paused by the gate with his arms resting upon it and watched the lengthening of the shadows.

And as he looked a girl came slowly up the path towards him.

He knew her quite well, but could not for the moment recollect where he had first seen her.

And then he remembered. It had been an afternoon back in the early spring. Sir Harry, pleading that he was too much of an invalid to venture out, had written asking Mr. Mowbray to come up to The Abbey to see him on business, and Mr. Mowbray, pleading engagements, had sent Anthony.

It had merely been to talk about the letting of the house. Sir Harry and his family had decided to live abroad for the present and were leaving almost immediately. Anthony had sat by the window making notes, and Sir Harry, giving unnecessary

instructions, had been walking up and down the room with his hands behind him. The door had sprung open and a girl had burst into the room. Anthony had hardly had time to notice her. She had not expected a stranger and was evidently in doubt whether she was to be introduced or not. Her father had solved the problem for her by telling her to run away and not come back. And if she did to come in more quietly next time and not like a whirlwind. And she had made a grimace and had gone out again.

He had only seen her for those few seconds, and it rather surprised him that he recollected her so minutely, even to the dimple in her chin.

She came nearer and nearer. He was wondering whether to speak to her when for the first time she looked up and their eyes met. She was beside a great group of delphiniums. He noticed that their deep blue was almost the same colour as the dress she was wearing. She must have taken a swift step behind them during some instant when he had taken his eyes off her. He waited a while, expecting her to emerge, but she did not do so, and for him to linger there might seem impertinence.

On his way back, past the side entrance to the house, he came upon old Wilkins, the caretaker; he had once been the coachman.

"When did the family come back?" Anthony asked him. It was odd that Sir Harry had not written. It might be that they had returned to England only for a short visit and had not thought it worth while.

The man stared at him. "What do you mean?" he said. "There's nobody here."

"But I've just seen her," said Anthony. "Miss Coomber." He wished the next moment that he had not said it, for the old man's face clearly showed that he thought Anthony mad.

"It must be her spirit, Mr. Anthony," he said, "that you've seen. Her body ain't here."

Anthony felt himself flushing. He laughed.

"I must have been dreaming," he said.

"That's the only explanation I can see," said Mr. Wilkins. He wished Anthony good afternoon and turned into the house. Anthony heard him calling to his wife.

It was dark before Anthony reached home.

CHAPTER X

MRS. Tetteridge was a pretty piquante lady. Her grey eyes no longer looked out upon the world with childish wonder. On the contrary they suggested that she now knew all about it, had found on closer inspection that there really was nothing to wonder about. A commonplace world with well-defined high-roads that one did well to follow, keeping one's eyes in front of one, suppressing all inclination towards alluring byways leading to waste lands and barren spaces.

Tetteridge's Preparatory and Commercial School had outgrown its beginnings. Mrs. Tetteridge had no objection to the "ambitious poor," provided they were willing and able to pay increased school fees and to dress their sons in conformity with the standards of respectability. But they no longer formed the chief support of the Rev. Doctor Tetteridge's Academy. The professional and commercial classes of Millsborough and its neighbourhood had discovered Mr. Tetteridge and were in the process of annexing him. Naturally they would prefer that he should get rid of the ragtail and the

bobtail that had flocked round him on his first coming. The Rev. Dr. Tetteridge, interviewing parents, found himself in face of the problem that had troubled the elder Miss Warmington when, years ago, in the very same room, she had sat over against Mrs. Strong'nth'arm, while stealing side glances at a self-possessed young imp perched on a horsehair chair with one leg tucked underneath him.

The Rev. Dr. Tetteridge was sorry—had known himself the difficulty of meeting tailors' bills. But corduroys, patched coats and paper collars! There were parents to be considered. A certain tone of appearance and behaviour must be maintained. The difficulty was not always confined to clothes. The children of agitators—of fathers who spoke openly and often against the existing order of society! In Millsborough there were many such. Unfortunate that the opinions of the fathers should be visited on the children. But so it was. Middle-class youth must be protected from possible contamination. The Rev. Dr. Tetteridge, remembering youthful speeches of his own at local debating societies, would flush and stammer. Mr. Tetteridge himself was not altogether averse to freedom of speech. But again the parents! The ambitious poor would give coarse expression to

contemptuous anger and depart, dragging their puzzled offspring with them. Some of the things they said would hurt the Rev. Dr. Tetteridge by reason of their truth, especially things said by those among the poor who had known him when he was Mr. Emanuel Tetteridge, to whom success had not yet come.

Mr. Emanuel Tetteridge had thought to help the poor. In what way better than by educating their sons? For which purpose, it would seem, he had been granted special gifts. It was the thing that compensated him for giving up his dreams. Maybe the poor, not knowing the etiquette of these matters, might have overlooked his playing of the fiddle; perhaps, lacking sense of propriety, might have tolerated even odes to "Irene."

An eccentric schoolmaster, an oddity of a schoolmaster, content with what the world called poverty so that he might live his own life, dream out his dreams, might have done this. If only he hadn't got on. If only success—a strong-minded lady—was not gripping him so firmly by the arm, talking incessantly, without giving him a moment to think of the wonderful place to which she was leading him: a big house of many rooms, strongly built and solidly furnished, surrounded by a high brick wall pierced by a great iron gate; with men and women

in uniform to see to his feeding and his clothing and his sleeping. At the proper times he would go to church. There would be a certain number of hours apportioned to him for exercise and even for recreation of an approved nature. And there would be times when his friends could come to see him. It had sounded to Emanuel Tetteridge as the description of a prison; but Mrs. Tetteridge had assured him it was a palace.

What further impressed him with the idea that it was to prison he was going was the information broken to him by Mrs. Tetteridge that before he could enter there he would have to take off his tweed suit and put on a black coat that buttoned close up to the neck, with a collar that fastened behind. Such, until his term of service was ended, would be his distinctive garb. He had put up opposition. But Mrs Tetteridge had cried, and when she cried the hardness went out of her eyes and she looked very pretty and pathetic; and Tetteridge had felt himself a brute and a traitor to love. So the day had come when he had taken off his old tweed suit forever and had put on the long black coat that buttoned round the neck. And Mrs. Tetteridge had come to his assistance with the collar and had laughed and clapped her pretty hands and kissed him.

But when she had left him and the door was closed he had gone down on his knees and had asked God to forgive him for his hypocrisy. He had knelt long and the tears had come; and when he rose it seemed to him that God, looking in, had smiled at him a little sadly and had laid a hand on him, calling him "poor lad." So that it remained with him that God understood what a difficult thing is life, and would, perhaps, give him another chance.

The time had come, so Mrs. Tetteridge had decided, for a move onward. The final destination, that country mansion standing in its own grounds, that she had determined upon, was still not yet in sight. Something half-way was her present idea, a large, odd-shaped house to the south of St. Aldys Church. It had once been a convent, but had been adapted to domestic purposes by an eccentric old East India trader who had married three wives. All his numerous progeny lived with him, and he had needed a roomy place. It was too big and too ugly for most people and had been empty for years. It belonged to a client of Mowbray's and it occurred to Mrs. Tetteridge that he might consider even an inadequate rent better than nothing at all. At her request Anthony met her there one afternoon with the key. The rusty iron gate squeaked when

Anthony pushed it open. They crossed a paved yard and mounted a flight of stone steps. The lock of the great oak door growled and grated when Anthony tried to turn the key. But it yielded at last, and a cold chill air crept up from the cellars and wrapped them round. Mrs. Tetteridge had difficulty in hiding her enthusiasm. The long tunnel-like rooms on the ground floor might have been built for class rooms. On the first floor was the great drawing-room. It would serve for receptions and speech-making. There were bedrooms for a dozen boarders if they had luck. The high-walled garden behind was bare save for decrepit trees and overgrown bushes that could easily be removed. A few cartloads of gravel would transform it into an ideal playground. They returned to the ground floor. At the end of the stone corridor Mrs. Tetteridge found a door she had not previously noticed. It led to a high vaulted room with a huge black marble mantelpiece representing two elephants supporting a small-sized temple. Opposite was a high-arched window overlooking the churchyard.

Mrs. Tetteridge surveyed it approvingly.

"This will be Emy's study," she said in a tone of decision. She was speaking to herself. She had forgotten Anthony.

Anthony was leaning against one of the elephants.

"Poor devil!" he said.

Mrs. Tetteridge looked up. There was a curious little smile about her pretty mouth.

"You don't like me," she said to Anthony.

"I should," answered Anthony, "quite well, if I didn't like Emy."

She came to the other end of the mantelpiece, resting her hand upon it.

"I've got you here alone," she said with a laugh, "and I'm going to have it out with you. I'm sorry you don't like me because I like you very much. But that isn't the important thing. I don't want you taking Emy's side against me. You've got great influence over him, and I'm afraid of you."

Anthony was about to answer. She made a gesture.

"Let me finish," she said, "then we shall both know what we're up against. You think I'm spoiling his life, robbing him of his dreams. What were they, put into plain language? To compose a little music; to write a little poetry. He'd never have earned enough to live on. Perhaps before he died he might have composed something out of which a music publisher might have pocketed thousands. He might have written poems that

would have brought him fame when it was too late. He'd never have made any real solid success. At that kind of work I couldn't help him; and, left to himself, he isn't the sort that ever does get on. At this work of schoolmastering I can help him. He has the talent and I have the business capacity. I've no use for dreamers. My father was a dreamer. He discovered things in chemistry that, if he had followed them up, would have made his fortune. They bored him. He was out for discovering a means of changing the atmosphere. I don't remember the details. You released a gas, or you eliminated a gas, or you introduced a gas. It was all about gases. That's the only thing I do remember. People instead of breathing in depression and weariness breathed in light-heartedness and strength. It sounds like a fairy story, but if you'd listened to him you'd have been persuaded it was coming, that it was only a question of time, and that when the secret was discovered the whole human race would be feeling like a prisoner who had escaped from a dungeon. That was his dream. And to him it was possible. It was for the sake of that dream that he took the position of science master at St. Aldys at a hundred and sixty a year. It gave him leisure for research. And we children paid the price for it. Both my brothers were

clever boys. Given the opportunity, they could have won their way in the world. One of them is a commercial traveller, and the other, as you know, a clerk in your office at eighty pounds a year. If he behaves himself and works hard he may, when he's fifty, be your managing clerk at three hundred."

She came closer to him and looked straight into his eyes.

"He's there," she said, "inside you—the dreamer. You know it and so do I," she laughed. "I've looked at him too often. You've had sense enough to chain him up and throw away the key. Take care he doesn't escape. If he does he'll take possession of you, and all your strength and cleverness will be at his service. He'll ride you without pity. He'll ride you to death."

She put her hands upon his shoulders and gave him a little shake.

"I'm talking to you for your good," she said. "I like you. Don't ever let him get the mastery over you. If he does, God help you."

She looked at her watch.

"I must be off," she said.

Anthony laughed.

"So like a woman," he said; "thinks that when

she has said all that she's got to say that there's nothing more to be said."

"You shall have your say another time," she promised him.

Anthony kept on the house in Bruton Square. It was larger than they wanted now the Tetteridges were gone, but he liked the old-fashioned square with its ancient rookery among the tall elms. He let the big classroom for an office to a young architect who had lately come to Millsborough. His aunt was delighted with the change. She had hated Mrs. Tetteridge, who had disapproved of her sitting on sunny afternoons on a Windsor chair outside the front door. It had always been her habit. And why what was harmless in Moor End Lane should be sinful in Bruton Square she could not understand. She was growing feeble. It was want of work according to her own idea, which was probably correct. As a consequence she was looking forward to heaven with less eagerness.

"I used to think it would be just lovely," she confessed to Anthony one day, "sitting about and doing nothing for ever and ever. It sounds ungrateful, but upon my word I'm not so sure that I'll enjoy it."

"Uncle did believe in God," said Anthony. "I

had a talk with him before he died. 'There must be somebody bossing it all,' he said. His hope was that God might think him of some use and find him a job."

"He was a good man, your uncle," answered his aunt. "I used to worry myself about him. But perhaps, after all, the Lord ain't as unreasonable as He's made out to be."

Mr. Mowbray was leaving the business more and more to Anthony. As a compensation for denial in other directions he was allowing himself too much old port and the gout was getting hold of him. Betty took him abroad as much as possible. Travelling interested him, and, away from his old cronies, he was easier to manage. He had always adored his children, and Betty, in spite of his failings, could not help being fond of him. Anthony knew that so long as her father lived she would never marry. Neither was he in any hurry. The relationship between them was that of a restful comradeship; and marriage could have made but little difference. Meanwhile the firm of Mowbray and Cousins was prospering. The private business was almost entirely in the hands of old Johnson, the head clerk. It was to his numerous schemes for the building up of Millsborough that Anthony devoted himself. The port of Millsborough was al-

ready an accomplished fact and its success assured. A syndicate for the construction of an electric tramway running from the docks to the farthest end of the densely populated valley had already got to work. A yet more important project was now in Anthony's mind. Hitherto Millsborough had been served by a branch line from a junction fifteen miles away. Anthony wanted a new track that should cross the river to the west of the new lock and, skirting the coast, rejoin the main line beyond the moor. It would bring Millsborough on to the main line and shorten the distance between London and the north by over an hour. It was the name of Mowbray that figured upon all documents, but Millsborough knew that the brain behind was Mowbray's junior partner, young Strong'nth'arm. Millsborough, believing in luck, put its money on him.

The Coomber family had returned to The Abbey somewhat unexpectedly. No tenant for the house had come forward. Also Sir Harry had come into unexpected legacy. It was not much, but with economy it would enable them to keep up the old place. It had been the home of the Coomber family for many generations, and Sir Harry, not expecting to live long, was wishful to die there.

Mr. Mowbray was away, and old Johnson, the

head clerk, had gone up to The Abbey to welcome them home and talk a little business.

"I doubt if they'll be able to pull through," he said to Anthony on his return to the office. "The grounds are all going to rack and ruin, to say nothing about the outbuildings and the farm. Even to keep it up as it is will take two thousand a year; and it doesn't seem to me that, after paying the interest on the mortgage, he'll have as much as that left altogether."

"What does he say himself?" asked Anthony. "Does he grasp it?"

" 'Oh, after me the deluge!' seems to be his idea," answered old Johnson. "Reckons he isn't going to live for more than two years, and may just as well live there. Talks of shutting up most of the rooms and eking out existence on the produce of the kitchen garden," he laughed.

"And Lady Coomber?" asked Anthony.

"Oh, well, he's fortunate there," answered Johnson. "Give her a blackbird to sing to her and a few flowers to look after and you haven't got to worry about her. Don't see how they're going to manage about the boy."

"He's in the army, isn't he?" said Anthony.

"In the Guards," answered Johnson. "They must be mad. Of course they've any amount of

rich connections. But I don't see their coming forward to that extent."

"He'll have to exchange," suggested Anthony. "Get out to India."

"Or else they'll starve themselves to try and keep it up," answered Johnson. "Funny thing, you can never get any sense into these old families. It's the inter-breeding, I suppose. Of course, there's the girl. She may perhaps put them on their legs again."

"By marrying some rich old bug?" said Anthony.

"Or rich young one," answered Johnson. "I don't think I've ever seen anything more lovely. I expect that's why they've come back, if the truth were told. If her aunt took her up and ran her for a season in London there oughtn't to be much difficulty."

"Except perhaps the girl," suggested Anthony.

"Oh! they look at things differently in that class," answered old Johnson. "They've got to."

The house and shop in Platts Lane where Anthony had been born had been taken over by the old jobbing tinker and his half-witted son. The old man had never been of much use, but the boy had developed into a clever mechanic. Bicycles were numerous now in Millsborough, and he had

gained the reputation of being the best man in the town for repairing them and generally putting them to rights. A question of repairs to the workshop had arisen. The property belonged to a client of Mowbray's, and Mr. Johnson was giving instructions to a clerk to call at the place on his way back from lunch and see what was wanted when Anthony entered the room.

"I'm going that way," he said. "I'll call myself."

Anthony stopped his cab a few streets off. He had carefully avoided this neighbourhood of sordid streets since the day he and his mother had finally left it behind them. The spirit of hopelessness seemed brooding there. The narrow grimy house where he was born was unchanged. The broken window in the room where his father had died had never yet been mended. The square of brown paper that he himself had cut out and pasted over the hole had worn well.

Anthony knocked at the door. It was opened by a slatternly woman, the wife of a neighbour. Old Joe Witlock was in bed with a cold. It was his son's fault, he explained. Matthew would insist on the workshop door being always left open. He would give no reason, but as it was he who prac-

tically earned the living his father thought it best to humour him. The old man was pleased to see Anthony, and they talked for a while about old days. Anthony explained his visit. It was the roof of the workshop that wanted repairing. Anthony went out again and round by the front way. The door was wide open, so that passing along the street one could see into the workshop. Matthew was repairing a bicycle. He had grown into a well-built good-looking young man. It was only about the eyes that one noticed anything peculiar. He recognized Anthony at once and they shook hands. Anthony was looking up at the roof when he heard a movement and turned round. A girl was sitting on a stool behind the open door. It was the very stool that Anthony himself had been used to sit upon as a child watching his father at his work. It was Miss Coomber. She held out her hand with a laugh.

"Father sent me out of the room last time I saw you," she said, "without introducing us. I am Eleanor Coomber. You are Mr. Anthony Strong-'nth'arm, aren't you?"

"Yes," answered Anthony. "I heard you had returned to The Abbey."

"I was coming to see you—or rather Mr. John-

son," she said, "with a letter from father; but I ran into a cart at the bottom of the hill. I'm really only a beginner," she added by way of excuse.

"Then you ought not to ride down steep hills," said Anthony, "especially not in a town."

"I'll get off at The Three Carpenters next time," she said, "if you promise not to tell."

Anthony took the letter and promised to deliver it. "You've come back for good, haven't you?" he asked.

"Tell me," she said. "You do know all about it, don't you? Do you think we shall be able to? I do love it."

Anthony was silent for a moment. She was evidently hanging on his answer.

"It's possible," he said, "with strict economy."

She laughed as though relieved.

"Oh, that!" she said. "We're used enough to that."

Matthew was blowing the furnace. The light from the glowing embers flickered round them.

"You were born here, weren't you?" she asked.

"In the house adjoining, to be exact," he answered with a laugh. "But this was my nursery. I used to sit on that very stool with my leg tucked underneath me watching my father work. I loved it when he blew the bellows and made the shadows

dance. At least I expect it's the same stool," he added. "There was the figure of a gnome that a strange old fellow I once knew carved upon it."

She sprang to the ground and examined it.

"Yes," she said. "It is the same. He must have been quite clever."

She reseated herself upon it. Her feet just touched the ground.

"I was born in Brazil," she said. "Father had a ranch near Rio. But we left there before I was three. The first thing I can really remember is The Abbey. We must have come on a visit, I suppose, to Sir William. It was the long garden between the cloister walls that was my first nursery. I used to play there with the flowers and make them talk to me."

"I saw you there," he said, "one afternoon."

She looked up at him. "When was that?" she asked.

"Oh, one evening in September," he said. "About two years ago." He had spoken without premeditation and now felt himself flushing. He hoped she might think it only the glow from the furnace fire.

"But we were in Florence," she said.

"I know," he answered, flushing still deeper.

"I asked old Wilkins when you had come back, and he thought I was mad."

"It is curious," she answered gravely. "I dreamed one day that I was walking there and met your namesake, Anthony the Monk. He was standing by the wicket gate on the very spot where he was slain. He called to me, but I was frightened and hid myself among the flowers."

Anthony was interested.

"Who was the Monk Anthony?" he asked.

"Don't you know the story?" she said. "He was the son of one Giles Strong'nth'arm and Martha his wife, according to the records of the monastery. It seems to have been a common name in the neighbourhood, but I expect you were all one family. The abbot had died suddenly of a broken heart. It was the time of the confiscation of the monasteries by Henry VIII, and the monks had chosen Anthony to act for them although he was the youngest of them all. He spent all night upon his knees, and when our ancestor arrived in the morning with his men-at-arms he met them at the great door of the chapel—it was where the rose garden is now—and refused to let them pass. The soldiers murmured and hesitated, for he had made of his outstretched arms a Cross, and a light, it was said, shone round about him. They would

have turned and fled. But it was to our ancestor, Percival de Combler—as it was then spelt—that The Abbey and its lands had been granted, and he was not the man to let it slip from his hands. He spurred his horse forward and struck down the Monk Anthony with one blow of his sword. And they rode their horses over his body and into the chapel."

"No," said Anthony. "I never heard the story. It always troubled my father, any talk about what his people had once been."

"You're so like him," she said. "It struck me the first time I saw you. You were sitting by the window writing. One of Sir Percival's young squires, who had been a student in Holland, made a picture of him from memory as he stood with his arms outstretched in the form of a Cross. Remind me next time you come to The Abbey and I'll show it you. It hangs in the library."

Matthew had finished. Anthony would not let her mount in the town. He insisted that she should wait until they got to The Three Carpenters, and walked beside her wheeling the bicycle. Her desire was to become an expert rider. A horse of her own was, of course, out of the question, and she had never cared for walking. They talked about The Abbey and the lonely moorland round about

it. One of the misfortunes of being poor was that you could do so little to help people. The moor folk had been used to look to The Abbey as a sort of permanent Lady Bountiful. The late Sir William had always been open-handed. She did what she could. There was an old bed-ridden labourer who lived in a lonely cottage with his granddaughter. The girl had suddenly left him and there was no one to look after him. He could just crawl about and feed himself, but that was all. Anthony's conscience smote him. Betty was away. The old man was one of her pensioners and he had promised to keep an eye on them till she came back. They arranged to meet there. He would see about getting some help.

CHAPTER XI

IT came so suddenly that neither of them at first knew what had happened. A few meetings among the lonely by-ways of the moor that they had honestly persuaded themselves were by mere chance. A little walking side by side where the young leaves brushed their faces and the young ferns hid their feet. A little laughing, when the April showers would catch them lost in talk, and hand in hand they would race for the shelter of some over-hanging bank and crouch close pressed against each other among the twisted roots of the stunted firs. A little lingering on the homeward way, watching the horned moon climb up above the woods, while the song of some late lark filled all the world around them. Until one evening, having said good-bye though standing with their hands still clasped, she had raised her face to his and he had drawn her to him and their lips had met.

Neither had foreseen it nor intended it. It had been so spontaneous, so natural, that it seemed but the signing of a pact, the inevitable fulfilling of the law. Nothing had changed except that, now, they knew.

He turned his footsteps away from the town. A deep endless peace seemed to be around him. So this was what Edward had meant when he had written, so short a while before the end, that love was the great secret leading to God, that without it life was meaningless and void.

It was for this that he had waited, like some blind chrysalis not knowing of the day when it should be born into the sunlight.

He laughed, remembering what his dream had been: wealth, power, fame: the senseless dream of the miser starving beside his hoarded gold. These things he would strive for now with greater strength than ever—would win them, not for themselves, but for Love's sake, as service, as sacrifice.

He had no fear. Others had failed. It was not love, but passion that burns itself out. There was no alloy in his desire for her. She was beautiful he knew. But he was drawn by it as one is moved by the beauty of a summer's night, the tenderness of spring, the mystery of flowers. There was no part of her that whispered to him. The thought of her hands, her feet, the little dimple in her chin; it brought no stirring of his blood. It was she herself, with all about her that was imperceptible, unexplainable, that he yearned for; not to possess, but to worship, to abide with.

For a period he went about his work as in a dream, his brain guiding him as a man's brain guides him crossing the road while his mind is far away. The thought of her was all around him. It was for that brief evening hour when they would meet and look into one another's eyes that he lived.

As the days wore by there came to him the suggestion of difficulties, of obstacles. One by one he examined them and dismissed them. Would her people consent? If not, they must take the law into their own hands. About Eleanor herself he had no misgivings. He knew, without asking her, that she would brave all things. God had joined them together. No power of man should put them asunder.

Betty—a dim shadowy Betty like some thin wraith—moved beside him as he walked. He was not bound to her. Even if there had been a pledge between them he would have had to break it. If need be, if God willed it, and Eleanor were to die—for it seemed impossible that any lesser thing could part them—he could live his life alone; or rather with the memory of her that would give him strength and courage. But to marry any other woman was unthinkable. It would be a degradation to both.

Besides, Betty had never loved him. There had

been no talk of love between them. It would have been a mere marriage of convenience, the very thing that Edward had foreseen and had warned him against. To live without love was to flout God. Love was God. He understood now. It was through love that God spoke to us, called to us. It was through the Beloved One that God manifested Himself to us. One built a tabernacle and abided with her. It was good to be there.

Would it interfere with his career? Old Mr. Mowbray had been reckoning on his marrying Betty. He might, to use a common expression, cut up rough. He would have to risk that. As things were now it would be difficult for the firm of Mowbray and Cousins to go on without him. But anger does not act reasonably. Mr. Mowbray, indignant, resentful, could do much to hamper him, delay him. But that would be the worst. He felt his own power. He had made others believe in him. They would have to wait a few years longer while he was recovering his lost ground. As to the ultimate result he had no doubt. The determination to win was stronger in him than ever before. Love would sharpen his wits, make clearer his vision. With Love one could compel Fate.

Betty and her father were abroad. They had gone to Italy for the winter, meaning to return

about the end of March. But Mr. Mowbray had taken an illness which had altered their plans. Mrs. Strong'nth'arm had taken to indulge herself each day in a short evening walk. Anthony did not usually return home till between seven and eight; and as she explained to Mrs. Newt, she found this twilight time a little sad for sitting about and doing nothing. She always took the same direction. It led her through the open space surrounding the church of St. Aldys, where stood the great square house of Mowbray and Cousins. Glancing at it as she passed, she would notice that the door was closed, that no light shone from any of its windows. A little farther on she would pass The Priory, and glancing through the iron gates, would notice that, so far as the front of the house was concerned, it showed no sign of life. Then she would turn and walk back to Bruton Square, and putting off her outdoor things, watch by the window till Anthony came in; and they would sit down to supper and she would talk to him about the business of the day, his schemes and projects. She never tired of hearing about them.

One evening she had glanced as usual in passing at the office of Mowbray and Cousins. The house was dark and silent. But from the windows of The Priory lights were shining. Mrs. Strong'nth'arm

looked about her with somewhat the air of a conspirator. The twilight was deepening into darkness and no one was about. She pushed open the iron gate and closed it softly behind her. She knocked at the door so gently that it was not till the third time that she was heard. The maidservant who answered it seemed flustered and bustled. Mr. and Miss Mowbray had only returned an hour ago. She did not think that either of them would see anybody. Mrs. Strong'nth'arm took from her pocket a soiled and crumpled envelope. She smoothed it out and begged the maid to take it at once to Miss Mowbray. The maid, reluctant and grumbling, took it and disappeared. She returned a minute later, and Mrs. Strong'nth'arm followed her upstairs to the small room over the hall that was Betty's sanctum. Betty was still in her travelling dress. She was tired, but made Mrs. Strong'nth'arm comfortable in an armchair beside the fire and closed the door.

"There's nothing wrong, is there?" she asked. "Anthony isn't ill?"

"He's quite all right," Mrs. Strong'nth'arm assured her. "How's your father?"

"Oh, not very well," answered Betty. "I've just sent him to bed," she laughed. "You're sure there's nothing wrong?" she asked again.

Mrs. Strong'nth'arm was sitting bolt upright on the edge of the chair, holding her hands out to the fire.

"Well, I shouldn't be here, an hour after your arrival, just for the sake of a gossip," she answered without looking up.

"That's just what I was thinking," said Betty.

"Perhaps I'd better get on to it," answered Mrs. Strong'nth'arm. "Then it will be the sooner over. I want to be back before he comes in, if I can."

Betty took a chair beside her, facing the fire.

"Don't be afraid," she said. "I've got an inkling of it."

The other looked at her in surprise.

"How could you?" she asked. "He's never said a word, even to me."

Betty smiled.

"Then how is it you know?" she answered. "Of course I knew they were back. He wrote and told me."

"Yes," said the other. "It's wonderful how love sharpens a woman's instincts." Suddenly she leant forward and gripped the girl's hand. "Don't let him," she said. "Stop him before it's too late." She felt the girl's hand tremble in hers. "I'm not thinking of you," she said. "Do it for his sake—save him."

"How can I?" the girl answered. "What would you have me do? Go down on my knees to him. Cry to him for pity?"

"Not pity," answered the other, "for common honesty. Put it to his honour. He thinks no end of that. That's his religion—the only religion he's got. He's yours, not hers. Hasn't he been dangling about after you for years? Doesn't he owe everything to you? His first start that gave him his chance! How can he get over that? Hasn't he compromised you? Doesn't everybody know of it and take it as a settled thing? What are you going to do if you let him throw you over now? If you let this brainless doll, just because of her white skin——"

"Don't, don't," cried the girl. She had risen. "What's the good? Besides, what right have I?"

"What right?" answered the other. "You love him; that's what gives you the right. You were made for him, to be his helpmeet, as the Bible says. Do you think I don't know him? What could she do for him except waste his money on her luxuries and extravagancies? What does her class know about money but how to fling it about and then laugh at the man when it's all spent? What do they know of the aching and sweating that goes to the making of it? What will be his share of the

bargain but to keep the whole pauper family of them in idle ease while he wears out his heart slaving for them, and they look down upon him and despise him. What right——"

Her voice had risen to a scream. The girl held up a warning hand. She checked herself and went on in a low, swift tone.

"What right has she to come forcing her way at the last moment into other people's lives, spoiling them just for a passing whim? Love! That sort of love! We know how long that lasts and what comes afterwards. Only in this case it will be she that will first tire of him. His very faithfulness will bore her. He hasn't the monkey tricks that attract these women. Upstart! Charity boy! That's what she'll fling at him when some fawning popinjay has caught her fancy. I tell you I know her and her sort. I've lived among them. They don't act before their servants."

She came closer. "Get him away from her. It's only a boy's infatuation for something new and strange. Tell him how it will spoil his career. You've only got to speak to your father for all his plans to come tumbling to the ground. He'll listen to that. He hasn't lost all his senses—not yet. Besides, she wouldn't want him then. She isn't out to marry a struggling young solicitor without

capital. You can take that from me." She laughed.

Betty looked at her. "You would have me injure him?" she said.

"Yes; to save him from her," answered the other. "she has changed him already. There are times when I don't seem to know him. She will ruin him if she has her way. Save him. You can."

The woman's vehemence had exhausted her. She dropped back into her chair.

"Listen," said the girl. "I do love your son. I love him so well that if he and this girl really loved one another and I was sure of it, I would do all I could to help him to marry her. It all depends upon that: if they really love one another."

The woman made to speak, but the girl silenced her with a gesture.

"Let me try and explain myself to you," she said, "because after tonight we must never talk about this thing again. I should have been very happy married to Anthony. I knew he did not love me. There is a saying that in most love affairs one loves and the other consents to be loved. That was all I asked of him. I did not think he was capable of love—not in the big sense of the word. I thought him too self-centred, too wrapped up in his ambition. I thought that I could make him

happy and that he would never know, that he would come to look upon me as a helper and a comrade. That perhaps with children he would come to feel affection for me, to have a need of me. I could have been content with that."

She had been standing with her elbow resting on the mantelpiece, gazing into the fire. Now she straightened herself and looked the other in the eyes.

"But I am glad I was wrong," she went on. "I'd be glad to think that he could love—madly, foolishly, if you will—forgetting himself and his ambition, forgetting all things, feeling that nothing else mattered. Of course, if it could have been for me"—she gave a little smile—"that would have been heaven. But I would rather—honestly rather that he loved this girl than that he never loved any one—was incapable of love. It sounds odd, but I love him the better for it. He is greater than I thought him."

The other was staring at her. The girl moved over to her and laid a hand upon her shoulder.

"I know what you are thinking," she said. "It doesn't last. A few years at most and the glory has departed. I'm not so sure of that."

She had moved away. Mechanically she was arranging books and papers on her desk. "I was

going over an old bureau in my mother's room a while ago," she said. "And in a little secret drawer I found a packet of letters written to her by my father. I suppose I ought not to have read them, but I don't regret it. I thought they were the letters he had written her in their courting days. They were quite beautiful letters. No one but a lover could have written them. But there were passages in them that puzzled me. There was a postscript to one, telling her of a new undercloth-ing made from pine wood that the doctors were recommending for rheumatism, and asking her if she would like to try it. And in another there was talk about children. And then it occurred to me to look at the date marks on the outside of the envelopes. They were letters he had written her at intervals during the last few years of her life; and I remembered then how happy they had been together just before the end. Our lives are like gardens, I always think. Perhaps we can't help the weeds coming, but that doesn't make the flowers less beautiful."

She turned her face again to the woman.

"And even if so," she said, "even if sooner or later the glory does fade, at least we have seen it —have seen God's face.

"I remember a blind boy," she continued, "that dad took an interest in. He had been born blind. Nobody thought he could be cured except a famous oculist in Lausanne that dad wrote to about him. He thought there was just a chance. My mother and I were going to Switzerland for a holiday and we took him with us. He was a dear, merry little chap in spite of it. The specialist examined him and then shook his head. 'I can cure him,' he said, 'but it will come again very soon.' He thought it would be kinder to leave him to his blindness. But my mother urged him and he yielded.

"It was wonderful to look into his eyes when he could see. We had warned him that it might be only for a time, and he understood. One night I heard a sound in his room and went in. He had crept out of bed and was sitting on the dressing-table in front of the window with his hands clasped round his knees. 'I want to remember it,' he whispered.

"You may be right," she said. "It may bring him sorrow, this love. But, even so, I would not save him from it if I could."

She knelt and took the older woman's hands in hers.

"We must not stand in his way, you and I," she

said. "If it were only his happiness and prosperity we had to think of we might be justified. But it might be his soul we were hurting."

The woman had grown calm. "And you," she asked, "what will you do?"

Betty smiled. "Oh, nothing very heroic!" she answered. "I shall have dad to look after for years to come. We shall travel. I'm fond of travelling. And afterwards—oh! there are heaps of things I want to do that will interest me and keep me busy."

The woman glanced at the clock. The time had slipped by; it was nearly eight. "He'll guess where I've been," she said.

"What will you tell him?" the girl asked.

"Seems to me," answered the woman, "I may as well tell him the truth: that I've had a bit of a clack with you. That you will do all you can to help him. That's right, isn't it?"

The girl nodded.

The woman took the girl's face in her two hands.

"Not sure you're not getting the best of it," she said. "I often used to lie awake beside my man, and wish I could always think of him as he was when I first met him: brave and handsome, with his loving ways and his kind heart. I saw him again when he lay dead, and all my love came

back to me. A girl thinks, when she marries, that she's won a lover. More often she finds that she's lost him. It seems to me sometimes that it's only dreams that last.

"Don't bother to come down," she said. "I'll let myself out."

She closed the door softly behind her. The girl was still kneeling.

CHAPTER XII

MRS. STRONG'NTH'ARM had not spoken figuratively when she had told Betty that there were times when she did not know her own son. As a child, there had always been, to her, something mysterious about him; a gravity, a wisdom beyond his years. There had been, with him, no period of fun and frolic that she might have shared in; no mischievousness for her to scold while loving him the more for it; no helplessness to make appeal to her. From the day when he could crawl his self-reliance had caused her secret tears. He never came to her for comfort or protection. Beyond providing for his bodily wants she was no use to him.

She had thought his father's death would draw him to her, making him more dependent on her. But instead there had grown up around him a strange aloofness that hid him still further from her eyes. For her labour and sacrifice, she knew that he was grateful; that he would never rest satisfied till he had rewarded her. He respected her, was always kind and thoughtful—even loved her in a way; she felt that. In the serving world, where

she had passed her girlhood, it was not uncommon for good and faithful servants to be regarded in the same way: with honour and affection.

At first the difference between him and all other boys she had ever known or heard of had been her daily cross. She recalled how eagerly he had welcomed his father's offer to teach him to read—how it was he who had kept his father up to the mark. At six years old he had taught himself to write. He had never cared for play. He was going to be a scholar, a dreamer—some sort of crank or another. She had no use for cranks. They earned but poverty and the world's contempt. Why couldn't he be like other lads, differing from them only by being cleverer and stronger? It was that had been her prayer.

In time she came to understand, and then her hope revived and grew. God intended him for great things. That was why he had been fashioned in another mould. He was going to be rich, powerful. Her dream would come true. He would be among the masters—would sit in the high places.

That he had never fallen in love—had never even had a "fancy"—was further proof of his high destiny. Heaven itself, eager for his success, had chosen the wise Betty to be his helpmeet. She, loving him, would cherish him—help him to climb.

But on his side there would be no foolish fondness to weaken or distract him. Youth with its crazy lure of love had passed him by. It was the one danger she had feared; and he had escaped it. Nothing stood between him and his goal. The mother saw all things shaping themselves to the greatness and glory of her son. What mattered her secret tears, her starved love.

And now, in the twinkling of an eye, as it were, all was changed. She saw him shorn of his strength, stripped of his self-reliance, uncertain of his purpose. She would try to draw him into talk about his schemes and projects. It had been their one topic of common interest. He had always valued her shrewd practicability. Now he would answer her indifferently: would lapse into long silences. The steadfast far-off look had gone out of his eyes. They had become the eyes of a boy, tender and shy: the eyes of a dreamer. The firm strong lines about the mouth had been smoothed away as if by some magic touch. She would watch, unknown to him, the smile that came and went about his parted lips. One evening, for no reason, he put his arm about her, smoothed back her thin grey hair, and kissed her. It was the first time he had ever shown her any sign of love, spontaneous and unasked for. Had it come at an

earlier date she would have cried for joy. But knowing what she did it angered her, though she spoke no word. It was but an overflowing of his love for this stranger—a few drops spilled from the cup he had poured out for another. Part of her desire that he should marry Betty had been her knowledge that he had no love for the girl. Betty would have taken nothing from her. But a mad jealousy had come to her at the thought that this stranger should have been the first to awaken love in him. What had she done for him, this passer-by, but throw him a glance from her shameless eyes? What could she ever do for him but take from him: ever crying give, give, give.

She told him of her talk with Betty, so far as it had been agreed upon between them. She had a feeling of comradeship with Betty.

"It might have been a bit awkward for you," she said, "if she had cared for you. I wanted to see how the land lay."

"How did you find it all out?" he asked. "I'm glad you have. I've been wanting to tell you. But I was so afraid you wouldn't understand."

"Why shouldn't I understand?" she asked dryly.

"Because I don't myself," he answered. "It is as if another Anthony had been growing up inside me, unknown to me, until he had become

stronger than myself and had taken possession of me. He was there when I was quite little. I used to catch a glimpse of him now and then. An odd little dreamy sort of a chap that used to wonder and ask questions. Don't you remember? I thought he was dead: that I had killed him so that he wouldn't worry me any more. Instead of which he was just biding his time. And now he is I, and I don't seem to know what's become of myself."

He laughed.

"I do love Betty," he went on, "and always shall. But it isn't with the love that makes a man and woman one: that opens the gates of life."

"It's come to you hot and strong, lad," she said; "as I always expected it would, if it ever did come. But it isn't the fiercest flame that burns the longest."

He flung himself on his knees in front of her, and putting his arms around her hid his face in her lap. She winced and her little meagre figure stiffened. But he did not notice. If she could but have forgotten: if only for that moment!

"Oh, mother," he whispered, "it's so beautiful; it does last. It must be always there. It is only that our mean thoughts rise up like mists and hide it from our eyes."

He looked up. There were tears in his eyes. He drew her face down to his and kissed it.

"I never knew how much I loved you till now," he said. "Your dear tired hands that have worked and suffered for me. But for you I should never have met and talked with her. It is you have given her to me. And, oh, mother, she is wonderful. There must be some mystery about it. Of course, to others, she is only beautiful and sweet; but to me there is something more than that. I feel frightened sometimes as though I were looking upon something not of this world.

"What did Betty say," he asked suddenly; "was she surprised?"

"She said she was glad," his mother answered him, "that you had it in you. She said she liked you all the better for it."

He laughed. "Dear Betty," he said, "I knew she'd understand."

His self-confidence, for the first time in his life, deserted him, when he thought of his necessary interview with Sir Harry Coomber. He himself was anxious to get it over in order to put an end to his suspense. It was Eleanor who held him back.

"You don't know dad," she said. "He's quite capable of carrying me off to China or Peru if he thought there was no other way of stopping it. Remember, I'm only seventeen. Besides," she added, "he may not live very long and I don't want

to hurt him. Leave it until I've had a talk with Jim. I'll write him to come down. I haven't seen him in his uniform yet. He'll be wanting to show himself." She laughed.

Jim was her brother, her senior by some five or six years. There was a strong bond of affection between them, and she hoped to enlist him on her side. She did not tell Anthony, but she saw in front of her quite a big fight. It was not only the matter of money, though she knew that with her lay the chief hope of retrieving the family fortunes. It was the family pride that would be her great obstacle. An exceptionally ancient and umbrageous plant, the Coomber genealogical tree. An illustration of it hung in the library. Adam and Eve were pictured tending its roots. Adam, loosening the earth around it, while Eve watered it out of a goat skin. The artist had chosen the fig-leaf period. It was with Charlemagne that it began to take shape. From William the Conqueror sprang the branch that bore the Coomber family. At first they did not know how to spell their own name. It was not till the reign of James I that its present form had got itself finally accepted.

Under this tree Eleanor and her brother sat one evening after dinner beside a fire of blazing logs. Sir Harry and Lady Coomber had gone to bed: they

generally did about ten o'clock. Jim had brought his uniform down with him and had put it on: though shy of doing so before the servants. Fortunately there were not many of them. Neither had spoken for some few minutes. Jim had been feeling instinctively all the evening that Eleanor had had a purpose in sending for him. He was smoking a briar wood pipe.

"I like you in your uniform, Jim," she said suddenly; "you do look handsome in it."

He laughed. "Guess I'll have to change into something less showy," he answered.

"Must you?" she asked.

"Don't see who is going to allow me fifteen hundred a year," he answered; "and it can't be done on less. There's Aunt Mary, of course, she may and she mayn't. Can't think of any one else."

"It was rather a mistake, wasn't it?" she suggested.

"It's always been the family tradition," he answered. "Of course, it was absurd in our case. But then it's just like the dear old guv'nor: buy the thing first and think about paying for it afterwards."

She was tapping the fender with her foot. "It's putting it coarsely," she said with a laugh, "but I'm afraid he was banking on me."

"You mean a rich marriage?"

She nodded.

He was leaning back in his chair, puffing rings of smoke into the air.

"Any chance of it?" he asked.

She shook her head. "Not now," she said. "I'm in love."

It brought him up straight.

"In love?" he repeated. "Why, you're only a kid."

"That's what I thought," she answered, "up to a month ago."

"Who is it?" he asked.

"A young local solicitor," she answered, "the son of a blacksmith. They say his mother used to go out charring. But that may be only servants' gossip."

"Good God," he exclaimed. "Are you mad?"

She laughed. "I thought I would tell you the worst about him first," she said, "and so get it over. Against all that, is the fact that he's something quite out of the common. He's the type from which the world's conquerors are drawn. Napoleon was only the son of a provincial attorney. He's the most talked about man in Millsborough already; and everything he puts his hand to succeeds. He's pretty sure to end as a millionaire with a seat in the

House of Lords. Not that I'm marrying him for that. I'm only telling you that to make it easier for you to help me. I'd love him just the same if he were a cripple on a pound a week. I'd go out charring, if need be, like his mother did. It's no good reasoning with me, Jim," she added after a pause. "When did a man or woman of our blood ever put reason above love? It's part of our inheritance. Your time will come one day; and then you will understand, if you don't now."

She had risen. She came behind him and put her arms about his neck.

"We've always stood by each other, Jim," she said. "Be a chum."

"What's he like?" he growled.

She laughed. "Oh, you needn't worry about that," she said. "There he is. Look at him."

She took his face between her two hands and turned it towards the picture of the monk Anthony standing with crossed arms, a strange light round about him.

"It's like some beautiful old legend," she continued. "Sir Percival couldn't have killed him. You know his body was never found. It was said that as he lay there, bleeding from his wounds, Saint Aldys had suddenly appeared and had lifted him up in his arms as if he had been a child and

had borne him away. He has been asleep all these years in the bosom of Saint Aldys; and now he is come back. It must be he. The likeness is so wonderful and it is his very name, Anthony Strong-'nth'arm. They were here before we came—the Strong'nth'arms—yeomen and squires. He is come to lift them up again. And I am going to right the old wrong by helping him and loving him."

"Have you told all that to the guv'nor?" he asked with a grin.

"I'm not sure that I won't," she answered. "It's all in Dugdale. Except about his coming to life again."

"It's his turning up again as a solicitor that will be your difficulty," Jim suggested. "If he'd come back as a curate——"

"It wouldn't have been true," she interrupted. "It was the church that ruled the land in those days. Now it is the men of business. He's going to make the valley into one great town and do away with slums and poverty. It was he who made the docks and brought the sea, and linked up the railway. He comes back to rule and guide—to make the land fruitful, in the new way; and the people prosperous."

"And himself a millionaire, with a seat in the House of Lords," quoted her brother.

"So did the old churchmen," she answered. "As Anthony, the monk, he would have become a cardinal with his palaces and revenues. A great man is entitled to his just wages."

Jim had risen, he was pacing the room.

"There'll be the devil to pay," he said. "The poor old guv'nor will go off his head. Aunt Mary will go off her head. They'll all go off their heads. I shall have to exchange and go out to India."

The colour had gone out of her cheeks.

"Why should they punish you for me?" she asked.

"Because it's the law of the world," he explained. "They've got to kick somebody. When he's a millionaire with his seat in the House of Lords they'll forgive us."

"You're making me feel pretty mean and selfish," she said.

"Love is selfish," he answered. "Don't see how you can help that." He halted suddenly in front of her. "You do love him?" he demanded. "You are not afraid to be selfish? You are going to let me down. You are going to hurt the guv'nor, very seriously. He hasn't had much luck in life. This

is going to be the last blow. You are willing to inflict it."

The tears were in her eyes.

"I must," she answered.

He took her by the shoulders.

"If you had hesitated," he said, "I should have known it wasn't the real thing. You are under orders, kid, and can't help yourself.

"You needn't worry about me," he said. "I'd have hated taking their confounded charity in any case. We must let the dad down as gently as possible. Leave it to me to break it to him. He must be used to disappointments, poor old buffer. Thank the Lord we haven't got to worry about the mater. Tell her all that about Monk Anthony. She will love all that. Never mind the millionaire business and the House of Lords."

Lady Coomber was a curiously shy, gentlelady, somewhat of an enigma to those who did not know her history; they included her two children. Her name had been Edith Trent. She came of old Virginia stock. Harry Comber, then a clerk in the British Embassy, had met her in Washington where she was living with friends, both her parents being dead. They had fallen in love with one another, and the marriage was within a day or two of taking place when the girl suddenly disappeared.

Young Harry, making use of all the influence he could obtain, succeeded in tracing her. She was living in the negro quarter of New Orleans, earning her living as a school teacher. She had discovered on evidence that had seemed to her to admit of no doubt that her grandmother had been a slave. It was difficult to believe. She was a beautiful, olive-skinned girl with wavy, dark brown hair and finely chiselled features. Young Harry Coomber, madly in love with her, had tried to persuade her that even if true it need not separate them. Outside America it would not matter. He would take her abroad or return with her to England. His entreaties were unavailing. She regarded herself as unclean. She had been bred to all the Southern American's hatred and horror of the negro race. Among her people the slightest taint of the "tar brush" was sufficient to condemn man or woman to life-long ostracism. She would have inflicted the same fate upon another, and a sense of justice compelled her not to shirk the punishment in her own case.

Five years later a circumstance came to light that proved the story false, and the long-delayed marriage took place quietly at the Sheriff's office of a small town in Pennsylvania.

But the memory of those five years of her life,

passed in what to her had been a living grave, had changed her whole character. An outcast among outcasts, she had drunk to the dregs their cup of terror and humiliation. In that city of shame, out of which for five years she had never once emerged, she had met men and women like herself: refined, cultured, educated. She had shared their long-drawn martyrdom. For her, the veil had been lifted from their tortured souls.

As a girl, she had been proud, haughty, exacting. It had been part of her charm. She came back to life a timid, gentle, sorrowful woman with a pity that would remain with her to the end for all creatures that suffered.

Left to herself, she would have joined some band of workers, as missionary, nurse or teacher—as servant in any capacity. It would not have mattered to her what so that she could have felt she was doing something towards lessening the world's pain. She had yielded to her lover's insistence from a sense of duty, persuaded that she owed herself to him for his faithfulness and patience. The marriage had brought disappointment to them both. She had hoped some opportunity would be afforded her of satisfying her craving to be of help if only to some few in some small corner of the earth. But her husband's straitened means had always

kept her confined to the bare struggle for existence. Another, in her place, might have been able to give at least sympathy and kindliness. But she was a woman broken in spirit. All her strength went out in her endeavours to be a good wife and mother. And even here she failed. She was of no assistance to her husband, as she knew. For business she had neither heart nor head. In society she was silent and colourless. On her husband's accession to the baronetcy and what was left of the estate, she had made a last effort to play her part. But the solitary years on the ranch had tended to increase her shyness, and secretly she was glad of the need for economy that compelled them to live abroad more or less in seclusion. The one joy she had was in her love of birds. To gather them about her, feed them, protect them by cunning means against their host of enemies, had become the business of her life. Even in the days of poverty she had been able to do that. She had come to love The Abbey even in the short time they had occupied it. She had made of its neglected gardens a bird sanctuary. Rare species, hunted and persecuted elsewhere, had found there a shelter. At early morning and late evening her little grey-clad figure could be seen stealing softly among the deep yew hedges and the tangled shrubberies that she would not have dis-

turbed. One could always tell her whereabouts by the fluttering of wings above her in the air—the babel of sweet voices that heralded her coming.

Her children had never been told her story. She had exacted that as a promise. Though her reason had been satisfied that the rumour told against her had been false, the haunting fear that it yet might be true remained with her. She would not have it passed on to them lest it should shadow their lives as it had darkened hers. Rather than that she was content that they should grow up wondering at the difference between her and other mothers, at her lack of interest in their youthful successes and ambitions; at her strange aloofness from the things that excited their fears and hopes.

As Jim had said, Eleanor's marrying a blacksmith's son would not trouble her. The story of Monk Anthony she would love. The wrong done to him would probably bring tears into the still childish eyes. The prophecy of his millions and his seat in the House of Lords would not interest her.

CHAPTER XIII

THEY were married abroad as it happened. Jim had exchanged; but his regiment, before going on to India, had been appointed to the garrison at Malta. There the family had joined him for the winter.

Fate had spared Sir Harry his last disappointment in life. Jim had not told him about Eleanor. There was no hurry. It could be done at any time. And he had died, after a few days illness, early in the spring. He had been busy, unknown to the others, fixing up with his sister Mary for Eleanor to come out in London during the season, and had built great hopes upon the result. Thus, so far as that matter was concerned, the poor old gentleman had died happy. Eleanor and her mother stopped on at a little place up in the hills. Anthony came out at the end of the summer; and they had been married in the English church. It was arranged that Lady Coomber should remain at Malta till Jim left for India; it might be the next year or the year after. Then she would come back to England and live with them at The Abbey. Anthony had not hoped to be able to take Eleanor back to The

Abbey, but the summer had brought him unusual good fortune. As a matter of fact, everything seemed to be prospering with him just now. He was getting nervous about it, wondering how long it would last. He was glad that he had been able to pay Jim a good price for the place; beyond that, when everything was cleared up and Lady Coomber's annuity provided for, there would not be much left.

Mrs. Strong'nth'arm would not come to live at The Abbey, though Eleanor was anxious that she should and tried to persuade her. Whether she thought Eleanor did not really want her or whether the reasons she gave him were genuine Anthony could not be sure.

"I should be wandering, without knowing it, into the kitchen," she explained; "or be jumping up suddenly to answer a bell. Or maybe," she added with a smile, "I'd be slipping out of the back door of an evening to the little gate behind the stables, and thinking I saw your father under the shadow of the elms, where he used to be always waiting for me. I'll be happier in the old square. There are no ghosts there—leastways, not for my eyes to see."

Besides, there was his aunt to be considered. He had thought that she might find a home with one

or another of her chapel friends. But Mrs. Newt had fallen away from grace, as it was termed, and was no longer in touch with her former circle. She had given back her fine tombstone to old Batson the stonemason who, not knowing what else to do with it, had used it to replace a broken doorstep leading to his office. She had come to picture her safe arrival at the gates of Endless Bliss with less complacency. She no longer felt sure of her welcome.

"Don't see what I've done to deserve it," she said. "All that I've ever tried to do has been to make myself comfortable in this world and to take good care, as I thought, to be on the right road for the next. I used to think it all depended upon faith: that all you had to do was to believe. But your poor uncle used to say it sounded a bit too cheap to be true. And if he was right and the Lord demands works, guess I'll cut a poor figure."

The idea had come to her to replace the optimism of her discarded tombstone by a simple statement of facts with underneath: "Lord be merciful to me, a sinner." But the head sexton, on being consulted as a friend, had objected to the quotation as one calculated to let down the tone of the cemetery, and had urged something less committal.

So the two old ladies remained at Bruton Square, keeping for themselves the basement and the three

small rooms at the top. Anthony added an extra kitchen and let the rest of the house to a Mr. Arnold Landripp, an architect. He had for some years been occupying the two large schoolrooms as an office. He was a widower. His daughter, who had been at school in the south of England and afterwards at University College, had now joined him. She was aged about twenty, and was said to be a "high-brow." The term was just coming into use. She was a tall, pale girl with coal black eyes. She wore her hair brushed back from her forehead and, in secret, smoked cigarettes, it was rumoured.

Betty and her father lived practically abroad. They had taken a flat in Florence and had let The Priory furnished to a cousin of Mr. Mowbray who owned the big steel works at Shawley, half-way up the valley.

Anthony had been generous over the sharing of profits; and Mr. Mowbray had expressed himelf as more than satisfied.

"I was running the business on to the rocks," he confessed. "There wouldn't have been much left for Betty. As it is, I shall die with an easy mind, thanks to you."

He held out his hand. He and Anthony had been having a general talk in the great room with its three domed windows that had been Mr. Mow-

bray's private office and was now Anthony's. He and Betty would be leaving early the next morning on their return to Italy. He hesitated a moment, still holding Anthony's hand, and then spoke again.

"I thought at one time," he said, "that it might have been a closer relationship than that of mere partners. But she's a strange girl. I don't expect she ever will marry. I fancy I frightened her off it." He laughed. "She knew that I loved her mother with as great a love as any woman could hope for. But it didn't save me from making her life one of sorrow.

"Do you know what's wrong with the Apostles Creed?" he said. "They've left out the devil. Don't you make the mistake, my lad, of not believing in him. He doesn't want us to believe in him. He wants us to believe that he is dead, that he never lived, that he's just an old wives' tale. We talk about the still small voice of God. Yes, if we listen very hard and if it's all quiet about us, we can hear it. What about the insistent tireless voice of the other one who whispers to us day and night, sits beside us at table, creeps with us into bed? David made a mistake; he should have said, 'the fear of the devil is the beginning of wisdom.' It began in the Garden of Eden. If the Lord only hadn't forgot the serpent! It has been the trouble

of all the reformers. They might have accomplished something: if they hadn't forgotten the devil. It's the trouble of every youngster, thinking he sees his life before him; they all forget the devil."

Anthony laughed.

"What line of tactics do you suggest for overcoming him?" he asked.

"Haven't myself had sufficient success to justify my giving advice," answered Mr. Mowbray. "All I can warn you is that he takes many shapes. Sometimes he dresses himself up as a dear old lady and calls himself Mother Nature. Sometimes he wears a shiny hat and claims to be nothing more than a plain man of business. Sometimes he comes clothed in glory and calls himself Love."

The old gentleman reached for his hat.

"Didn't expect to find me among the prophets, did you?" he added with a smile.

He was growing feeble, and Anthony walked back with him to The Priory. They passed St. Aldys churchyard on their way.

"I'll just look in," said Mr. Mowbray, "and say good-bye. I always like to before I go away."

Mr. Mowbray had bought many years ago the last three vacant graves in the churchyard. His

wife lay in the centre one and Edward to the right of her.

They stood there for a while in silence.

"I suppose it's only my fancy," said Mr. Mowbray, "but you seem to me to grow more like Ted every year. I don't mean in appearance, though even there I often see a look in your eyes that reminds me of him. But in other ways. Sometimes I could almost think it was he speaking."

"I have changed," said Anthony. "I feel it myself. His death made a great void in my life. I felt that I had been left with a wound that would never heal. And then one day the thought came to me—it can hardly be called a thought. I heard his very voice speaking to me, with just that little note of irritation in it that always came to him when he was arguing and got excited. 'I am not dead,' he said. 'How foolishly you are talking. How can I be dead while you are thinking of me—while you still love me and are wanting me. Who wants the dead? It is because you know I live, and that I love you, and always shall, that you want me. I am not dead. I am with you.' "

"Yes," said Mowbray after a little pause, "he loved you very dearly. I was puzzled at first because I thought you so opposite to one another. But now I know that it was my mistake."

They did not talk during the short remainder of their walk. At the gate of The Priory the old gentleman stopped and turned.

"Kiss me, Anthony," he said, "there's nobody about."

Anthony did so. It seemed quite natural somehow. He watched Mr. Mowbray pass up the flagged causeway to the door and then went back to his work.

Betty had been quite frank with him, or so he had thought.

"It's fortunate we didn't marry," she said. "What a muddle it would have ended in—or else a tragedy. Do you remember that talk we had one evening?"

"Yes," he answered. "You said that if you ever married it would be a man who would 'like' you—think of you as a friend, a comrade."

"I know," she laughed. "To be candid, I had you in my mind at the moment. I thought that you would always be so sane—the sort of husband one could rely upon never to kick over the traces. Curious how little we know one another."

"Would you really have been satisfied?" he asked, "when it came to the point. Would not you have demanded love as your right?"

"I don't think so," she answered, musing. "I

suppose the explanation is that a woman's love is maternal rather than sexual. It is the home she is thinking of more than the lover. Of course, I don't mean in every case. There are women for whom their exists one particular He, or no other. But I fancy they are rare."

"I wonder sometimes," he said, "what would have happened to me if I'd never met her. I suppose I should have gone on being quite happy and contented."

"There are finer things than happiness," she answered.

A child was born to them late in the year. Anthony had never seen a baby before, not at close quarters. In his secret heart, he was disappointed that it was not more beautiful. But as the days went by it seemed to him that this defect was passing away. He judged it to be a very serious baby. It had large round serious eyes. Even its smile was thoughtful. They called it John Anthony.

The elder Mrs. Strong'nth'arm resented the carriage being sent down for her. She said she wasn't so old that she could not walk a few miles to see her own grandson. Both she and Eleanor agreed that he was going to be like Anthony. His odd ways, it was, that so strongly reminded the elder Mrs. Strong'nth'arm of his father at the same age.

They came together over John Anthony, the elder and the younger Mrs. Strong'nth'arm.

"It's her artfulness," had argued the elder Mrs. Strong'nth'arm to herself at first; "pretending to want my advice and hanging upon my words; while all the time, I reckon, she's laughing at me."

But the next day or the day after she would come again to answer delightedly the hundred questions put to her—to advise, discuss, to gossip and to laugh—to remember on her way home that she had kissed the girl, promising to come again soon.

Returning late one afternoon she met Anthony on the moor.

"I've left her going to sleep," she said. "Don't disturb her. She doesn't rest herself sufficiently. I've been talking to her about it.

"I'm getting to like her," she confessed shamefacedly. "She isn't as bad as I thought her."

He laughed, putting an arm about her.

"You'll end by loving her," he said. "You won't be able to help it."

"It'll depend upon you, lad," she answered. "So long as your good is her good I shall be content."

She kissed him good night for it was growing dusk. Neither he nor Eleanor had ever been able to persuade her to stay the night. With the nurs-

ery, which had been the former Lady Coomber's dressing-room, she was familiar, having been one of the housemaids. But the big rooms on the ground floor overawed her. She never would enter by the great door, but always by a small side entrance leading to the house-keeper's room. Eleanor had given instructions that it should always be left open.

He walked on slowly after he had left his mother. There, where the sun was sinking behind the distant elms, she lay sleeping. At the bend of the road was the old white thorn that had witnessed their first kiss. Reaching it he looked round stealthily and, seeing no one, flung himself upon the ground and, stretching out his arms, pressed his lips to the sweet-smelling earth.

He laughed as he rose to his feet. These lovers' rhapsodies he had once thought idle nonsense! They were true. Going through fire and water—dying for her, worshipping the ground she trod on. This dear moorland with its lonely farmsteads and its scattered cots; its old folks with their furrowed faces, its little children with shy wondering eyes; its sandy hollows where the coneys frisked at twilight; its hidden dells of fern and bracken where the primroses first blossomed; its high banks beneath the birches where the red fox had his dwell-

ing; its deep woods, bird-haunted: always he would love it, for her sake.

He turned and looked back and down the winding road. The noisome town half-hidden by its pall of smoke lay stretched beneath him, a few faint lights twinkling from out the gloom. There too her feet had trod. Its long sad streets with their weary white-faced people; its foul, neglected places where the children played with dirt. This city of maimed souls and stunted bodies! It must be cleansed, purified—made worthy for her feet to pass. It should be his life's work, his gift to his beloved.

CHAPTER XIV

LADY COOMBER joined them in the spring. Jim's regiment had been detained at Malta longer than had been anticipated. Her presence passed hardly noticed in the house. Anthony had seen to it that her little pensioners, the birds, had been well cared for, they began to gather round her the first moment that they saw her, as if they had been waiting for her, hoping for her return. She herself could not explain her secret. She had only to stretch out her hand for them to come to her. She took more interest in the child than Eleanor had expected. She stole him away one morning, and was laughing when she brought him back. She had shown him to her birds and they had welcomed him with much chirruping and fluttering; and after that, whenever he saw her with her basket on her arm, he would stretch out his arms to her for her to take him with her.

Another child was born to them in the winter. They called him after Eleanor's brother Jim; and later came a girl. They called her Norah. And then Eleanor fell ill. Anthony was terror-stricken. He had never been able to accept the popular idea

of God as a sort of kindly magician to whom appeal might be made for miraculous benefits in exchange for praise and adulation—who would turn aside sickness, stay death's hand in response for importunity. His common sense had revolted against it. But suddenly his reasoning faculties seemed to have deserted him Had he been living in the Middle Ages he would have offered God a pilgrimage or a church. As it was, he undertook to start without further delay his various schemes to benefit the poor of Millsborough. He would set to work at once upon those model-dwellings. It was always easy for him now to find financial backing for his plans. He remembered Betty's argument: "I wouldn't have anything started that couldn't be made to pay its own way in the long run. If it can't do that it isn't real. It isn't going to last." She was right. As a sound business proposition, the thing would live and grow. It was justice not charity that the world stood most in need of. He worked it out. For the rent these slum landlords were exacting for insanitary hovels the workers could be housed in decent flats. Eleanor's illness had been pronounced dangerous. No time was to be lost. The ground was bought and cleared. Landripp, the architect, threw himself into his labours with enthusiasm.

Landripp belonged to the new school of materialists. His religion was the happiness of humanity. Man to him was a mere chance product of the earth's crust, evolved in common with all other living things by chemical process. With the cooling of the earth—or may be its over-heating, it really did not matter which—the race would disappear—be buried, together with the history of its transient passing, beneath the eternal silences. Its grave might still roll on—to shape itself anew, to form out of its changed gases another race that in some future æon might be interested in examining the excavated evidences of a former zoological period.

Meanwhile the thing to do was to make man as happy as possible for so long as he lasted. This could best be accomplished by developing his sense of brotherhood out of which would be born justice and good will. Man was a gregarious animal. For his happiness he depended as much upon his fellows as upon his own exertions. The misery and suffering of any always, sooner or later, resulted in evil to the whole body. In society, as it had come to be constituted, the happiness of all was as much a practical necessity as was the health of all. For its own sake, a civilized community could no more disregard equity than it dare tolerate an

imperfect drainage system. If the city was to be healthy and happy it must be seen to that each individual citizen was healthy and happy. The pursuit of happiness for ourselves depended upon our making others happy. It was for this purpose that the moral law had developed itself within us. So soon as the moral law within us came to be acknowledged as the only safe guide to all our actions, so soon would Man's road to happiness lie clear before him.

That something not material, that something impossible to be defined in material terms had somehow entered into the scheme, Mr. Landripp was forced to admit. In discussion, he dismissed it—this unknown quantity—as "superfluous energy." But to himself the answer was not satisfactory. By this reasoning the superfluous became the indispensible, which was absurd. There was his own favourite phrase: The preservation of the species; the moral law within, compelling all creatures to sacrifice themselves for the good of their progeny. To Mr. Arnold S. Landripp, aware of his indebtedness for his own existence to the uninterrupted working of this law; aware that his own paternal affections had for their object the decoying of Mr. Arnold S. Landripp into guarding and cherishing and providing for the future of Miss Emily

Landripp; who in her turn would rejoice in labour for her children, and so ad infinitum, the phrase might have significance. His reason, perceiving the necessity of the law, justified its obligations.

But those others? Unpleasant-looking insects—myriads of them—who wear themselves out for no other purpose than to leave behind them an egg, the hatching of which they will not live to sea. Why toil in darkness? Why not spend their few brief hours of existence basking in their beloved sunshine? What to them the future of the Hymenoptera? The mother bird with outstretched wings above the burning nest, content to die herself if only she may hope to save her young. Natural affection, necessary for the preservation of the species. Whence comes it? Whence the origin of this blind love—this blind embracing of pain that an unknown cause may triumph.

Or take the case of Mr. Arnold S. Landripp's own particular family. That hairy ancestor, fear-haunted, hunger-driven, fighting against monstrous odds to win a scanty living for himself. Why burden himself still further with a squalling brood that Mr. Arnold S. Landripp may eventually evolve? Why not knock them all on the head and eat the pig himself? Who whispered to him of the men of thought and knowledge who should one day

come, among whom Mr. Arnold S. Landripp, flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone, should mingle and have his being?

Why does the present Mr. Landripp impair his digestion by working long into the night that Millsborough slums may be the sooner swept away and room be made in Millsborough town for the building of decent dwellings for Mr. Landripp's poorer brethren? The benefiting of future generations! The preservation and improvement of the species? To what end? What sensible man can wax enthusiastic concerning the progress of a race whose final goal is a forgotten grave beneath the debris of a derelict planet.

To Mr. Landripp came also the reflection that a happiness that is not and cannot by its nature be confined to the individual, but is a part of the happiness of all; that can be marred by a withered flower and deepened by contemplation of the stars must, of necessity, have kinship with the Universal. That a happiness, the seeds of which must have been coeval with creation, that is not bounded by death must, of necessity, be linked with the Eternal.

Working together of an evening upon the plans for the new dwellings, Anthony and he would often break off to pursue the argument. Landripp

would admit that his own religion failed to answer all his questions. But Anthony's religion contented him still less. Why should a just God, to whom all things were possible, have made man a creature of "low intelligence and evil instincts," leaving him to welter through the ages amid cruelty, blood and lust, instead of fashioning him from the beginning a fit and proper heir for the kingdom of eternity? That he might work out his own salvation! That a few scattered fortunates, less predisposed to evil than their fellows or possessed of greater powers of resistance, might struggle out of the mire—enter into their inheritance: the great bulk cursed from their birth, be left to sink into destruction. The Christ legend he found himself unable to accept. If true, then God was fallible, His omniscience a myth—a God who made mistakes and sought to rectify them. Even so, He had not succeeded. The number of true Christians—the number of those who sought to live according to Christ's teaching were fewer today than under the reign of the Cæsars. During the Middle Ages the dying embers of Christianity had burnt up anew. Saint Francis had insisted upon the necessity of poverty, of love—had preached the brotherhood of all things living. Men and women in increasing numbers had for a brief period ac-

cepted Christ not as their scapegoat but as their leader. There had been men like Millsborough's own Saint Aldys—a successful business man, as business was understood in his day—who on his conversion had offered to the service of God not ten per cent. of his booty but his whole life. Any successful business man of today who attempted to follow his example would be certified by the family doctor as fit candidate for the lunatic asylum. Two thousand years after Christ's death one man, so far as knowledge went, the Russian writer Tolstoy, had made serious attempt to live the life commanded by Christ. And all Christendom stood staring at him in stupefied amazement. If Christ had been God's scheme for the reformation of a race that He Himself had created prone to evil then it had tragically failed. Christianity, a feeble flame from the beginning, had died out, leaving the world darker, its last hope extinguished.

They had been working long into the short June night. Landripp had drawn back the curtains and thrown open the window. There came from the east a faint pale dawn.

"There is a God I could believe in, worship and work for," he said. "Not the builder of the heaven and of the earth, who made the stars also. Such there may be. The watch presupposes the

watchmaker. I grant all that. But such is outside my conception—a force, a law, whatever it may be, existing before the beginning of Time, having its abiding place beyond Space. The thing is too unhuman ever to be understood by man. The God I could love and serve is something lesser and yet perhaps greater than such."

He turned from the window and leaning against the mantelpiece continued:

"There is a story by Jean Paul Richter, I think. I read the book when I was a student in Germany. There was rather a fine idea in it: at least so it seemed to me. The man in the story dies and beyond the grave he meets Christ. And the Christ is still sad and troubled. The man asks why, and Christ confesses to him. He has been looking for God and cannot find Him. And the man comforts Him. Together they will seek God, and will yet find Him. I think it was a dream, I am not sure. It is the dream of the world, I suppose. Personally I have given up the search, thinking it hopeless. But I am not sure. Christ's God I could believe in, could accept. He is the God—the genius, if you prefer the word, of the human race. He is seeking—still seeking to make man in His own image. He has given man thought, consciousness, a soul. It has been slow work and He is still only

at the beginning of His labours. He is the spirit of love. It is by love, working for its kind, working for its species, that man has evolved. It is only by love of his kind, of his species, that man can hope to raise himself still further. He is no God of lightnings and of thunders. The moral law within us, the voice of pity, of justice is His only means of helping us. The Manichæans believed that Mankind was devil created. The evidence is certainly in their favour. The God that I am seeking is not the Omnipotent Master of the universe who could in the twinkling of an eye reshape man to His will. But a spirit, fighting against powerful foes, whom I can help or hinder—the spirit of love, knocking softly without ceasing at the door of a deaf world. The wonder of Christ is that He was the first man to perceive the nature of God. The gods that the world had worshipped up till then—that the world still worships—are the gods man has made in his own image: gods glorying in their strength and power, clamouring for worship, insisting on their 'rights'; gods armed with punishments and rewards. Christ was the first man who conceived of God as the spirit of love, of service, a fellow labourer with man for the saving of the world."

Anthony was still seated at the long table, facing the light.

"May it not be that you have found Him?" he said. "May He not be the God we are all seeking?"

Landripp gave a short laugh.

"He wouldn't be popular," he answered. "Not from Him would Job have obtained those fourteen thousand sheep and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand she asses as a reward for his patience. 'The God from whom all blessings flow,' that is the God man will praise and worship. The God I am seeking asks, not gives."

The plans were finished; the builders got to work. On the very day of the laying of the foundation-stone the doctors pronounced Eleanor out of danger. Anthony forgot his talks with Landripp. God had heard his prayer and had accepted his offering. He would continue to love and serve Him, and surely goodness and mercy would follow him all the days of his life. One of the minor steel foundries happened to be on the market. He obtained control and re-established it on a new profit-sharing principle that he had carefully worked out. His system would win through by

reason of its practicability; the long warfare between capital and labour end in peace. His business genius should not be only for himself. God also should be benefited. He got together a small company for the opening of co-operative shops, where the poor should be able to purchase at fair prices. There should be no end of his activities for God.

Eleanor came back to him more beautiful, it seemed to him, than she had ever been. They walked together, hand in hand, on the moor. She wanted to show him how strong she was. And coming to the old white thorn at the parting of the ways, she had raised her face to his; and he had drawn her to him and their lips had met, as if it had been for the first time.

She would be unable to bear more children, but that did not trouble them. Little Jim and Norah grew and waxed strong and healthy. Norah promised to be the living image of her mother. She had her mother's faults and failings that Anthony so loved: her mother's wilfulness with just that look of regal displeasure when any one offended or opposed her. But also with suggestion of her mother's graciousness and kindness.

Jim, likewise, took after the Coomber family. He had his uncle's laughing eyes and all his ob-

stinacy, so Eleanor declared. He was full of mischief, but had coaxing ways and was the idol of the servants' hall.

John was more of the dreamer. Lady Coomber had taught him to read. She had grown strangely fond of the child. In summertime they would take their books into the garden. They had green hiding-places known only to themselves. And in winter they had their "cave" behind the great carved screen in the library.

As time went by, Eleanor inclined more towards the two younger children. They were full of life and frolic, and were always wanting to do things. But Anthony's heart yearned more towards John, his first-born.

CHAPTER XV

A GOD needing man's help, unable without it to accomplish His purpose. A God calling to man as Christ beckoned to His disciples to follow him, forsaking all, to suffer and to labour with Him. The thought had taken hold of him from the beginning: that summer's night when he and Landripp had talked together, until the dawn had drawn a long thin line of light between the window curtains.

And then had come Eleanor's sudden recovery, when he had almost given up hope, on the very day of the laying of the foundation-stone of the new model dwellings; and it had seemed to him that God had chosen this means of revealing Himself. The God he had been taught. The God of his fathers. Who answered prayers, accepted the burnt offering, rewarded the faithful and believing. What need to seek further? The world was right. Its wise men and its prophets had discovered the true God. A God who made covenants and bargains with man. Why not? Why should not God take advantage of Anthony's love for Eleanor to make a fair businesslike contract with him?

"Help me with these schemes of yours for the happiness of my people and I will give you back your wife." But the reflection would come: Why should an omnipotent God trouble Himself to bargain with His creatures, take round-about ways for accomplishing what could be done at once by a movement of His will? A God who could have made all things perfect from the beginning, beyond the need of either growth or change. Who had chosen instead to write the history of the human race in blood and tears. Surely such a God would need man's forgiveness, not his worship. The unknown God was yet to seek.

Landripp had been killed during the building of the model dwellings. It had been his own fault. For a stout, elderly gentleman to run up and down swaying ladders, to scramble round chimney stacks, and balance himself on bending planks a hundred feet above the ground was absurd. There were younger men who could have done all that, who warned Mr. Landripp of the risks that he was running. He had insisted on supervising everything himself. The work from its commencement had been to him a labour of love. He was fearful lest a brick should be ill-laid.

Anthony had a curious feeling of annoyance as he looked upon the bruised and broken heap of

rubbish that had once been his friend. Landripp had been dead when they picked him up. They had put him on a stretcher and carried him round to his office. Anthony had heard the news almost immediately, and had reached Bruton Square as the men were coming out. The body lay on the big table in the room where he and Anthony had had their last long talk. The face had not suffered and the eyes were open. There may have been a lingering consciousness still behind them for it seemed to Anthony that for an instant they smiled at him. And then suddenly the light went out of them.

It was tremendously vexing. He had been looking forward to renewal of their talks. There was so much he wanted to have said to him: questions he had meant to put to him; thoughts of his own, that he had intended to discuss with him. Where was he? Where had he got to? It was ridiculous to argue that Landripp himself—the mind and thought of him—had been annihilated by coming into contact with a steel girder. Not even a cabbage dies. All that can happen to it is for it to be resolved into its primary elements to be reborn again. This poor bruised body lying where the busy brain had been at work only an hour before, even that would live as long as the solar sys-

tem continued. Its decay would only mean its transformation. Landripp himself—the spirit that came and went—could not even have been hurt. The machinery through which it worked was shattered. Anthony could not even feel sorry for him. He was angry with him that he had not been more careful of the machinery.

Landripp had been the first person with whom he had ever discussed religion. As a young man he had once or twice ventured the theme. But the result had only reminded him of his childish experiments in the same direction. At once, most people shrivelled up as if he had suggested an indelicate topic, not to be countenanced in polite society. Especially were his inquiries discouraged by the clergy of all denominations. At the first mention of the subject they had always shown signs of distress—had always given to him the impression that they were seeking to guard a trade secret. Landripp had opened his mind to the conception of a religion he could understand and accept. God all-powerful and glorious; the great omnipotent Being who had made and ordered all things! What could man do for such? As well might the clay ask how it could show its gratitude to the potter. To praise God, to adore Him, to fall down before Him, to worship Him, what use could that

be to Him? That the creatures He had made should be everlastingly grovelling before Him, proclaiming their own nothingness and His magnificence: it was to imagine God on a par with an Oriental despot. To obey Him? He had no need of our obedience. All things had been ordered. Our obedience or disobedience could make no difference to Him. It had been foreseen—fore-ordained from the beginning. Even forgetting this —persuading ourselves that some measure of free-will had been conferred upon us, it was only for our own benefit. Obey and be rewarded, disobey and be punished. We were but creatures of His breath, our souls the puppets of His will. What was left to man but to endure? Even his endurance bestowed upon him for that purpose. It was death not life that God—if such were God—had breathed into man's nostrils.

But God the champion, the saviour of man. God the tireless lover of man, seeking to woo him into ever nobler ways. God the great dreamer, who out of death and chaos in the beginning had seen love; who beyond life's hate and strife still saw the far-off hope, and called to men to follow Him. God the dear comrade, the everlasting friend, God the helper, the King. If one could find Him?

Landripp had left his daughter a few thousands; and she had decided to open a school again at Bruton Square, in the rooms that her father had used for his offices. Inheriting his conscientiousness she had entered a training college to qualify herself as a teacher. Towards the end, quite a friendship had existed between Mrs. Strong'nth'arm and the Landripps. With leisure and freedom from everlasting worry her native peasant wit had blossomed forth and grown; and Landripp had found her a wise talker. She had become too feeble for the long walk up to The Abbey, but was frightened of the carriage with its prancing horses. So often Eleanor would send little John down to spend the afternoon with her. Old Mrs. Newt was dead; and, save for a little maid, she was alone in the house. She made no claim with regard to the two younger children. It was only about John she was jealous.

One day she took the child to see the house in Platt's Lane where his father had been born. Old Witlock had finished his tinkering. His half-witted son Matthew lived there by himself. No one else ever entered it. Matthew cooked his own meals and kept it scrupulously clean. Most of the twenty-four hours he spent in the workshop. His skill and honesty brought him more jobs than he

needed, but he preferred to remain single-handed. The workshop door was never closed. All day, summer and winter, so long as Matthew was there working it remained wide open. At night Matthew slept there in a corner sheltered from the wind, and then it would be kept half-closed but so that any one who wished could enter. He would never answer questions as to this odd whim of his, and his neighbours had ceased thinking about it. They took a great fancy to one another, Matthew and the child. Old Mrs. Strong'nth'arm would sometimes leave him there, and his father would call for him on the way home. He had taken for his own the stool on which wandering Peter had many years ago carved the King of the Gnomes. And there he would sit by the hour swinging his little legs, discussing things in general with Matthew while he worked. At the child's request Anthony had bought the house and workshop so that Matthew might never fear being turned out.

There grew up in the child a strange liking for this dismal quarter, or rather three-quarters of the town of Millsborough that lay around Platt's Lane. Often, when his father called for him of an afternoon at Bruton Square he would plead for a walk in their direction before going home. He liked the moorland, too, with its bird life and its little creep-

ing things in brake and cover that crouched so still while one passed by. There he would shout and scamper; and when he was tired his father would carry him on his shoulder. But in the long sad streets he was less talkative.

One day, walking through them, Anthony told him how, long ago, before the mean streets came, there had been green fields and flowers with a little river winding its way among the rocks and through deep woods.

"What made the streets come?" the child asked.

Riches had been discovered under the earth, so Anthony explained to him. Before this great discovery the people of the valley had lived in little cottages—just peasants, tilling their small farms, tending their flocks. A few hundred pounds would have bought them all up. Now it was calculated that the winding Wyndbeck flowed through the richest valley in all England.

"What are riches?" asked the child. "What do they do?"

Riches, his father explained to him, were what made people well off and happy.

"I see," said John. But he evidently did not, as his next question proved conclusively.

"Then are all the people happy who live here now?" he asked. They had passed about a score

of them during the short time they had walked in silence. "Why don't they look it?"

It had to be further explained to John that the riches of the valley did not belong to the people who lived and died in the valley, who dug the coal and iron or otherwise handled it. To be quite frank, these sad-eyed men and women who now dwelt beside the foul black Wyndbeck were perhaps worse off than their forbears who had dwelt here when the Wyndbeck flowed through sunlit fields and shady woods, undreaming of the hidden wealth that lay beneath their careless feet. But to a few who lived in fine houses, more or less far away, in distant cities, in pleasant country places. It was these few who had been made well off and happy by the riches of the valley. The workers of the valley did not even know the names of these scattered masters of theirs.

He had not meant to put it this way. But little John had continually chipped in with those direct questions that a child will persist in asking. And, after all, it was the truth.

Besides, as he went on to explain still further to little John, they were not all unhappy, these dirty, grimy, dull-eyed men and women in their ugly clothes living in ugly houses in long ugly streets under a sky that rained soot. Some of them

earned high wages—had, considering their needs, money to burn, as the saying was.

"I see," said John again. It was an irritating habit of his, to preface awkward questions with, I see. "Then does having money make everybody happy?"

It was on the tip of Anthony's tongue. He was just about to snap it out. Little John mustn't worry his little head about things little Jacks can't be expected to understand. Little boys must wait till they are grown-up, when the answer to all these seemingly difficult questions will be plain to them. But as he opened his lips to speak there sprang from the muddy pavement in front of him a little impish lad dressed in an old pair of his father's trousers, cut down to fit him, so that the baggy part instead of being about the knee was round his ankles—a little puzzled lad who in his day had likewise plagued poor grown-up folk with questions it might have been the better for them had they tried to answer.

"No, John," he answered. "It doesn't make them happy. I wonder myself sometimes what's the good of it. How can they be happy even if they do earn big money, a few of them. The hideousness, the vileness that is all around them. What else can it breed but a sordid joyless race.

They spend their money on things stupid and gross. What else can you expect of them. You bring a child up in the gutter and he learns to play with mud, and likes it."

They were walking where the streets crept up the hillside. Over a waste space where dust and ashes lay they could see far east and west. The man halted and flung out his arms.

"The Valley of the Wyndbeck. So they call it on the map. It ought to be the gutter of the Wyndbeck. One long, foul, reeking gutter where men and women walk in darkness and the children play with dirt."

He had forgotten John. The child slipped a hand into his.

"Won't the fields ever come back?" he asked.

Anthony shook his head. "They'll never come back," he said. "Nothing to do for it, John, but to make the best of things as they are. It will always be a gutter with mud underneath and smoke overhead, and poison in its air. We must make it as comfortable a gutter as the laws of supply and demand will permit. At least we can give them rainproof roofs and sound floors and scientific drainage, and baths where they can wash the everlasting dirt out of their pores before it becomes a part of their skin."

From where they were they could see the new model dwellings towering high above the maze of roofs around them.

"We'll build them a theatre, John. They shall have poetry and music. We'll plan them recreation grounds where the children can run and play. We'll have a picture gallery and a big bright hall where they can dance."

He broke off suddenly. "Oh, Lord, as if it hadn't all been tried," he groaned. "Two thousand years ago, they thought it might save Rome. Bread and circuses, that is not going to save the world."

They had reached, by chance, Platt's Lane. The door of the workshop stood open as ever. They could hear the sound of Matthew's hammer and see the red glow of the furnace fire. John slipped away from his father's side, and going to the open door called to Matthew.

Matthew turned. There was a strange look in his eyes. The child laughed, and Matthew coming nearer saw who it was.

It was late, so after exchanging just a greeting with Matthew they walked on. Suddenly John caught his father by the sleeve.

"Do you think he is still alive," he said, "Christ Jesus?"

Anthony was in a hurry. He had ordered the carriage to wait for them in Bruton Square.

"What makes you ask?" he said.

"Matthew thinks he is," explained the child, "and that He still goes about. That is why he always leaves the door open, so that if Christ passes by He may see him and call to him."

Anthony was still worried about the time. He had to see a man on business before going home. He promised little John they would discuss the question some other time. But, as it happened, the opportunity never came.

CHAPTER XVI

THERE came a day when Betty returned to take up her residence at The Priory. Since her father's death she had been travelling. At first she and Anthony had corresponded regularly. They had discussed religion, politics, the science of things in general; he telling her of changes and happenings at home, and she telling him of her discoveries abroad. She wanted to see everything there was to be seen for herself, and then seek to make use of her knowledge; she would, of course, write a book. But after his eldest son's death, which had happened when the child was about eight years old, Anthony for a time had not cared to write. Added to which there were long periods during which Betty had disappeared into ways untrodden of the postman. Letters had passed between them at ever-lengthening intervals, dealing so far as Anthony was concerned chiefly with business matters. It seemed idle writing about himself: his monotonous prosperity and unclouded domestic happiness. There were times when he would have been glad of a friend to whom he could have trusted secrets, but

the thread had been broken. Conscious of strange differences in himself, he could not be sure that Betty likewise had not altered. Her letters remained friendly, often affectionate, but he no longer felt he knew her. Indeed there came to him the doubt that he ever had.

It was on a winter's afternoon that Anthony, leaving his office, walked across to The Priory to see her. She had been back about a week, but Anthony had been away up north on business. She had received him in the little room above the hall that had always been her particular sanctum. Mr. Mowbray, when he had let the house furnished to his cousin, had stipulated that this one room should remain locked. Nothing in it had been altered. A wood fire was burning in the grate. Betty was standing in the centre of the room. She came forward to meet him with both hands:

"It's good to see you again," she said. "But what have you done to your hair, lad?" She touched it lightly with her fingers. She pushed him into the easy chair beside the blazing fire and remained herself standing.

He laughed. "Oh, we grow grey early in Millsborough," he said.

He was looking up at her puzzled. "I've got it," he said suddenly.

"Got what?" she laughed.

"The difference in you," he answered. "You were the elder of us when I saw you last, and now you are the younger. I don't mean merely in appearance."

"It's a shame," she answered gravely. "You've been making money for me to spend. It's that has made you old. They're all so old, the money-makers. I've met so many of them. Haven't you made enough?"

"Oh, it isn't that," he answered. "It gets to be a habit. I shouldn't know what else to do with myself now."

She made him talk about himself. It was difficult at first, there seemed so little to tell. Jim was at Rugby and was going into the Guards. His uncle, Sir James, had married, and had three children, a boy and two girls. But the boy had been thrown from his pony while learning to ride and was a cripple. So it was up to young Strong'nth'-arm to take over the Coomber tradition. As he would have plenty of money all would be easy. His uncle was still in India, but was coming back in the spring. He had been appointed to Aldershot.

Norah was at Cheltenham. The Coomber girls had always gone to Cheltenham. She had ideas of her own and was anxious herself to cut school life

short and finish her education abroad in Vienna. One of the disadvantages of being rich was that it separated you from your children. But for that the boy could have gone to his old friend Tetteridge. So far as education was concerned, he would have done better. The girl could have gone to Miss Landripp's at Bruton Square. They would have been all together and it would have been jolly.

Eleanor was wonderful. Betty would find her looking hardly a day older than when she had last seen her.

Betty laughed. "Good for you, lad," she said. "It means you are still seeing her through lover's eyes. It's seventeen years ago, the date you are speaking of."

Anthony could hardly believe it at first, but had to yield to facts. He still maintained that Eleanor was marvellous. Most women in her position would have clamoured for fashion and society—would have filled The Abbey with her swell friends and acquaintances, among whom Anthony would always have felt himself an outsider—would have insisted on a town house and a London season, Homburg and the Riviera—all that sort of thing: leaving Anthony to grind away at the money mill in Millsborough. That was what his mother had always feared. His mother had changed her

opinion about Eleanor long ago. She had come to love her. Of course, when Norah came home there would have to be changes. But by that time it would all fit in. He would be done with money-making. He had discovered—or, rather, Eleanor had discovered it for him—that he was a good speaker. She had had to bully him, at first, into making the attempt; and the result had surprised even her. He might go into Parliament. Not with any idea of a political career, but to advocate reforms that he had in his mind. Parliament gave one a platform. One spoke to the whole country.

Tea had been brought. They were sitting opposite to one another at a small table near the fire.

"It reminds one of old times," said Betty. "Do you remember our long walks and talks together up on the moor, we three. We had to shout to drown the wind."

He did not answer immediately. He was looking at a reflection of himself in a small Venetian mirror on the opposite wall. It came back to him what old Mr. Mowbray had once said to him, as to his growing likeness to Ted. There was a suggestion, he could see it himself, especially about the eyes.

"Yes," he answered. "I remember. Ted was the dreamer. He dreamed of a new world. You

were for the practical. You wanted improvements made in the old."

"Yes," she answered. "I thought it could be done."

He shook his head.

"You were wrong," he said. "We were the dreamers. It was Ted had all the common sense."

"Oh, yes, I go on," he said in answer to her look. "What else is to be done. There used to be hope in the world. Now one has to pretend to hope. I hoped model dwellings were going to do away with the slums. There are miles more slums in Millsborough today than there were ten years ago; and myself, if I had to choose now I'd prefer the slums. I'd feel less like being in prison. But we did all we could. We put them in baths. It was a new idea in Millsborough. The local Press was shocked. 'Pampering the Proletariat,' was one of their headlines. They could have saved their ink. Our bath was used to keep the coals in. If they didn't do that, they emptied their slops into it. It saved them the trouble of walking to the sink. We gave them all the latest sanitary improvements, and they block the drains by turning the places into dustbins. And those that don't, throw their muck out the window. They don't want cleanliness and decency. They were born and bred in mud

and the dirt sticks to them; and they bring up their children not to mind it. And so it will go on. Of course, there are the few. You will find a few neat homes in the filthiest of streets. But they are lost among the mass, just as they were before. It has made no permanent difference. Millsborough is blacker, fouler, viler than it was when we started in to clean it. Garden suburbs. We began one of those five years ago on the slopes above Leeford, and already it has its Alsatia where its disreputables gather together for mutual aid and comfort. What is it all, but clearing a small space and planting a garden in the middle of a jungle. Sooner or later the jungle closes in again. Every wind blows in seeds.

"This profit-sharing. I can see the end of that. They quarrel among themselves over the sharing. Who shall have the most. Who shall be forced to accept least. And the strong gather together: it is for them to dictate the division; and the weaker snarl and curse, but have to yield. And brother is against brother, and father is against son. And so the old game of greed and grab begins anew. Co-operative shops. And the staff is for ever insisting on the prices being raised to their own kith and kin, so that their wages may be increased out of the profits. And when I expostulate they talk

to me about my own companies and the fine dividends we earn by charging high prices to our neighbours." He laughed.

"You remember Sheepskin," he went on, "the old vicar? The Reverend Horace Pendergast has got the job now. He's a cousin of Eleanor's—rattling good preacher. We're hoping to make him a bishop. I went to see the old man once, when I was a youngster, to arrange about my uncle's funeral, and he threw me in a sermon. I don't know why—I wasn't worrying much about religion in those days—but I can still see his round, pink, puzzled face and his little fat hands that trembled as he talked. It was near Christmas time—Christ's birthday; and all that he could think about, he told me, were the Christmas bills and how to meet them. It wasn't his fault. How can a respectable married man be a Christian? 'How can I preach Christ?' —there were tears in his eyes. 'Christ the outcast, the beggar, the servant of the poor, the bearer of the Cross.' That's what he had started out to preach. The people would only have laughed at him. He lives in a big house, they would have said, and keeps four servants and a gig. His sons go to college, and his wife and daughters wear rich garments. 'Struggle enough I find it, Strong'nth'-arm,' he confessed to me. 'But I ought not to be

struggling to do it. I ought to be down among the people, preaching Christ, not only with my lips but with my life.' It isn't talkers for God, it is fighters for God that are wanted. Men who are not afraid of the world!"

The daylight had faded. Betty had pushed the table into a corner. They sat beside the blazing logs.

"Some years ago," said Betty, "I travelled from San Francisco to Hong Kong in company with a Chinese gentleman. It was during the off-season, and half a dozen of us had the saloon to ourselves. There were two commercial travellers and a young missionary and his wife. By process of natural selection—at least so I like to believe—Mr. Cheng and myself chummed on. He was one of the most interesting men I have met, and I think he liked talking to me. I remember one brilliantly clear night we were alone together on the deck. I was leaning back in my chair looking up at the Southern Cross. Suddenly I heard him say that the great stumbling block in the way of man's progress was God. Coming from anybody else the remark would have irritated me; but I knew he wasn't trying to be clever; and as he went on to explain himself I found myself in agreement with him. Man's idea of God is of some all-powerful Being who is

going to do everything for him. Man has no need to exert himself; God, moving in mysterious ways, is labouring to make the world a paradise where man may dwell in peace and happiness. All man has to do is to trust in God and practise patience. Man if he took the task in hand for himself could turn this world into a paradise tomorrow without waiting for God. But it would mean man giving up his greeds and passions. It is easier to watch and pray. God has promised man the millenium, in the dim and distant future. Men by agreeing together could have the millenium ready in time for their own children. When man at last grasps the fact that there is no God—no God, that is, in the sense that he imagines— that whatever is going to be done for him has got to be done by himself, there will be born in man the will to accomplish his own salvation. It is this idea of man as the mere creature—the mere puppet of God—powerless to save himself, helpless to avert his own fate, that through the ages has paralysed man's spiritual energies.

"God is within us. We are God. Man's free will is boundless. His future is in his own hands. Man has only to control his evil instincts and heaven is here; Man can conquer himself. Of his own will, he does so every day. For the purposes

of business, of pleasure, of social intercourse, he puts a curb upon his lusts and passions. It is only the savage, the criminal that lets them master him. Man is capable of putting greed and selfishness out of his life. History, a record of man's sin and folly, is also a record of man's power to overcome within himself the obstacles that stand in the way of his own progress.

"Garibaldi called upon his volunteers to disregard all worldly allurements, to embrace suffering, wounds and death for the cause of Italian unity. And the young men flocked to his banners. Let the young men once grasp that not God but they themselves can win for all mankind fredom and joy, and an ever-increasing number of them will be willing to make the necessary sacrifice.

"One man showed them the way. There have, at various times, been born exceptional men through whom the spirit we call God has been able to manifest itself, to speak aloud to men. Of all these, your Christ was perhaps more than any of the others imbued with this spirit of God. In Christ's voice we recognize the voice of God. It is the voice we hear within us, speaking to each of us individually. Christ's one commandment: 'Love one another,' is the commandment that God has been whispering to us from

the beginning of creation. Out of that Commandment life sprang. Through that commandment alone can life be made perfect. Love one another. It would solve every problem that has plagued mankind since the dawn of the Eocene epoch. It would recall man's energies from the barren fields of strife to mutual labour for the husbandry of all the earth. In the words of your prophet: 'The Wilderness be made glad, the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose.' Why has man persisted in turning a deaf ear to this one supreme commandment? Why does man persistently refuse to follow the one guide who would lead him out of all his sorrows? To love is as easy as to hate. Why does he set himself deliberately to cultivate the one and not the other? There is no more reason for a French peasant hating a German farm labourer, for a white man hating a brown man, for a Protestant hating a Catholic, than for loving him. But our hate we take pains to nourish, it is a part of our education. We teach it to our children. At the altar of hate man is willing to make sacrifice; he will give to his last penny. On the altar of hate the mother will consent to the slaying of her own first-born. All things that are good come to man through love. No man denies this. No man but seeks, within the circle of his own home, to surround himself with

love. Life without love is every man's fear. To gain and keep love man sacrifices his own ease and comfort. To love is sweeter than to hate. Man watches himself, lest by sloth or indifference he should let love die; plans and labours to strengthen and increase love. If he would, he could love all men. If man took the same pains to cultivate his will to love that he takes to cultivate his will to hate, he could change the world.

"Man excuses himself for disregarding Christ's express commandment by telling himself that the salvation of the world is God's affair, not his. God's love will make for man's benefit a new heaven and a new earth. There is no need for man to bestir himself. While man pursues his greeds and hatreds God is busy preparing the miracle. One day, man is to wake up and find, to his joy, that he loves his fellow man; and the tears of the world will be wiped away. It is not God, it is man that must accomplish the miracle. It is by man's own endeavour that he will be saved; by cleansing himself of hate, by setting himself in all seriousness to this great business of loving. Until he obeys Christ's commandment he shall not enter the promised land.

"I have put it more or less into my own words," she explained, "but I have given you the sense of

it. He thought the time would come—perhaps soon —when the thinkers of the world would agree that civilization had been progressing upon a wrong line —that if destruction was to be avoided, man must retrace his steps. He thought that, apart from all else, the mere instinct of self-preservation would compel the race to turn aside from the pursuit of material welfare to the more important work of its spiritual development. He did not expect any conscious or concerted movement. Rather he believed that men and women in increasing numbers would withdraw themselves from the world, that they might live lives in conformity with God's laws. He was a curious mixture of the religious and the scientific. He often employed the word God, but could not explain what he meant beyond that he 'felt' him. He held that the only altar at which a reasonable man could worship was the altar erected by the Greeks: 'To the Unknown God.' Christ he regarded as a Promethean figure who had received the fire from heaven and brought it down to men. That fire would never be extinguished. The spirit of Christ still moved about the world. It was the life force behind what little love still glowed and flickered among men. One day the smouldering embers would burst into flame."

Betty put in two or three years at The Priory on and off, occupying herself chiefly with writing. But the wanderlust had got into her blood, and her book finished she grew restless.

One day Anthony and Eleanor had dined with her at The Priory. Eleanor had run away immediately after dinner to attend a committee meeting of the Children's Holiday Society of which she was the president. Betty, she was sure, sympathized sufficiently with the movement to forgive her. She would be back soon after nine. Betty and Anthony took their coffee in the library.

"I wanted you both to come tonight," she explained. "I've got into a habit of acting suddenly when an impulse seizes me. I may wake up any morning and feel I've got to go."

"Whither?" he asked.

"How much money can I put my hands on within the next few months?" she asked.

She had warned him that she might be talking business. He mentioned a pretty considerable sum.

"All earned by the sweat of other people's brows," she commented with a smile.

"You give away a pretty good deal of it," he reminded her consolingly.

"Oh, yes," she said, "I am very good. I take from them with one hand and give them back thirty per cent. of it with the other; that's what our charity means. And it doesn't really help, that's the irritating part of it. It's just the pouring out of a libation to the God-of-Things-as-they-are. 'The poor always ye have with you.' "

"I sometimes think," he said, "that Christ, when he told the young man to sell all he had and give it to the poor, was thinking rather of the young man than of the poor. It would have done them but such fleeting good. But to the young man it meant the difference between slavery and freedom. To be quit of it all. His horses and his chariots. His fine houses and his countless herds. His army of cringing servants. His horde of fawning clients. How could he win life, bound hand and foot to earth? Not even his soul was his own. It belonged to his great possessions."

She was going into central Russia. She had passed through there some years ago and had happened upon one of its ever recurring famines. There was talk of another in the coming winter.

"The granary of Europe," she continued. "I believe we import one-third of our grain from Russia. And every year the peasants die there of starvation by the thousands. That year I was there

they reckoned a hundred thousand perished in one valley. They were eating the corpses of the children. And on my way to St. Petersburg I passed stations where the corn was rotting by the roadside. The price had fallen and it wasn't worth transporting. The devil must get some fun looking down upon the world."

He had been standing by the window with his hands in his pockets. It was still twilight. He swung round suddenly.

"I believe in the Devil," he said. "I don't mean the devil that we sing about—the discontented angel that God has let out at the end of a chain, that is finally to be destroyed when he has served God's purpose. But the eternal spirit of evil that is a part of all things—that brooded over chaos before God came. He also must be our father. Hate, cruelty, lust, greed: how else were we born with them? Would they have come to us from God. Evil also claims us for his children—is fighting for possession of us, is calling to us to labour with him, to turn the world into hell. Hate one another. Do ill to one another. That is his commandment. Which does the world obey: God or the Devil? Does hate or love rule the world? Whom does the world honour? The greedy man, the selfish man, the man who 'gets on'

by trampling on his fellows. Who are the world's leaders? The makers of war, the preachers of hate. Who dares to follow Christ—to fight for God. How many? That's the trouble of it. 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross.' Poverty, self-denial, contempt, loneliness. We are afraid."

He took a cigar from his case.

"It could be done," he said. "That's the tragedy of it. The victory won for God: if only a few of us had the courage. There are thousands of men and women in this England of ours alone who believe—who are convinced that the only hope of the world lies in our following the teaching of Christ. If these thousands of men and women were to say, each to himself, 'I will no longer sin against the light that is within me. Whatever others may do—whatever the difficulties, the privations to myself may be, I will lead Christ's life, I will obey his commandments.' If here in Millsborough there were, say, only a handful of men and women known to be trying to lead Christ's life, some of them rich men who had given up their possessions, feeling that so long as there is poverty in the world no man who loves his neighbour as himself can afford to be rich. Others, poor men and women content to remain poor, knowing that to gain riches

one must serve Mammon and not God. A handful of men and women, scattered, silent, putting themselves forward only when some work for Christ was to be done. A handful of men and women labouring in quietness and in confidence to prepare the way for God: teaching their children new desires, new ambitions.

"Some would fail. But others would succeed. More would follow. It needs only a few to set the example. It would appeal to all generous men and women, to the young. Fighting for God. Fighting with God to save the world. Not to save oneself—not to get one's own sweet self into heaven. That is the mistake that has been made: Appealing to the self that is in man, instead of to the Christ that is in man. 'Believe and thou shalt be saved.' It is an appeal to man's greed, to his self-interest. It is heroes God wants, not mercenaries. Never mind yourself. Forget the wages. Help God to save the world. This little land of England, this poor, sad, grimy town of Millsborough, where each man hates his neighbour and the children play with dirt. Help God to make it clean and sweet. Help God to wipe away the tears of the world. Help God to save all men.

"We talk about the Spirits of Good and Evil, as if Evil were of its own nature subordinate to the

Good—as if God's victory were certain; a mere matter of time. How do we know? Evil was the first-born. All things that do not fight against it revert to it. How do we know it will not triumph in the end. God is not winning. God is being driven back. Man will not help. Once His followers were willing to suffer—to die for Him. Today we are afraid of a little ridicule—of a few privations. We think it can be done by preaching—by the giving of alms. There is but one way to fight for God: the way of Christ. Let the young man deny himself, take up his cross."

There had followed a silence. How long it lasted neither could have told. The door opened and Eleanor entered.

She was full of her meeting. The committee had settled to send two hundred children for a fortnight to the seaside. She had let Anthony in for a hundred guineas. She laughed.

Betty explained that they might not be meeting again for some time. She was off to Russia. Eleanor was curious and Betty explained her plans.

Eleanor was seated on the arm of Anthony's chair. She had noticed he was not smoking, and had lighted his cigar for him.

"It was poor mother's sorrow," she said. "'I have never done anything,' she confided to me once

towards the end. I have given away a little money, but it was never mine to give. It never cost me anything. I want to give myself. It is the only gift that heals."

Eleanor jumped down from her perch, and taking Betty's face in her hands kissed her.

"How fine of you," she said. "I rather envy you."

CHAPTER XVII

HOW to tell her? The door was not quite closed. He could hear her voice giving directions to the maid, the rustling of garments, the opening and shutting of drawers. Later, he would hear her wish the maid good night; and then the door would open and she would come in for their customary talk before going to bed. It was the hour when she had always seemed to him most beautiful, clad in loose shimmering robes, veiling her wonderful whiteness. Tonight she would clasp her soft arms round his neck and, laughing, tell him how proud she was of him. All the evening he had read the promise of it in her eyes. And they would kiss, perhaps for the last time.

Could he not put it off—again, for the hundredth time? Was it not cruel to choose this night? It had been a day of roses, and she had been so happy. In the morning there had been the unveiling of the war memorial, the great granite cross with the four bronze guns at its base. It stood high up on the crest of the moor, for all the town to see, the sky for its background; and carved in golden

letters round its pedestal, so that the cold grey cross seemed, as it were, to have grown out of their blood, the names of the young men who had given their lives that England might rejoice. His speech had been a supreme success. It had moved the people as such speeches rarely do, for with every word he uttered he had been thinking of himself.

Even his two children, occasionally critical of him, had congratulated him. The boy had had tears in his eyes. He had looked very handsome in his weather-stained uniform, in spite of the angry scar across his cheek. He had taken things into his own hands at the beginning of the war, had enlisted as a private, and had won his commission on the field. For Norah, the war had happened at a providential moment. During the suffrage movement she had caused Eleanor many a sleepless night. The war had caught her up and directed her passions into orthodox channels. It had done even better for her. It had thrown her into the company of quite a nice boy, with only a consumptive cousin between him and an ancient peerage. To Anthony himself, the war had brought, without any effort of his own, increasing wealth and power. Millsborough had become a shining centre for the output of munitions. Anthony's genius for organization had been the motive force behind. At the

luncheon that had followed the unveiling of the memorial a Cabinet Minister had dropped hints. Eleanor's prophecy of long ago that Anthony would become a millionaire with a seat in the House of Lords would all come true.

In the evening the great new dining-room, fashioned out of the ruins of what had once been the monk's refectory, had been thrown open for the first time. All their world and his wife had dined there; his fellow-townsmen who had grown up with him, who had watched, admired and envied his marvellous career; county folk from far and near; famous folk, humble folk. The Reverend Horace Pendergast, most eloquent of divines, and soon to be a bishop, had proposed the toast of "The uncrowned king of Millsborough," his dear and well-beloved cousin Anthony Strong'nth'arm—had quoted scripture appropriate in speaking of one so evidently singled out for favour by the Lord. General Sir James Coomber, in a short, blunt speech, had seconded the toast, claiming merit for himself as having from the first, and against family opposition, encouraged his sister to stick to her guns and marry the man of her choice. Not that she had needed much encouragement, Jim had added amid laughter. She would have done it, was Jim's opinion, if all the King's horses, and all

the King's men had tried to prevent her. And from Eleanor, seated at the other end of the long table, had come a distinct "Hear, hear," followed by more laughter. Others, one after another, had risen spontaneously to add their testimony to the honour and affection with which he was regarded throughout Millsborough, and all round about.

And then an odd thing had happened. As he rose to respond there came into his mind the sudden thought that here within the space of these same walls must often have supped his namesake, the monk Anthony. And with the thought there came the face and form of the young monk plainly before him. It entered by a small serving door that stood ajar, and slipped into a vacant seat left empty by a guest who had been called away. He knew the whole thing was an hallucination, a fancy that his sudden thought had conjured up. But the curious part of it was that the face of the young monk, who with elbows resting on the table was looking at him with such earnestness, was not the face of the monk in the picture with which he was familiar, the hero, the martyr, but the face of a timid youth. The hands were clasped, and the eyes that were fixed on Anthony seemed to be pleading with him.

He could not remember what he had said. He

did not think it was the speech he had intended. He had the feeling he was answering the questioning eyes of the young monk still fixed upon him. But it seemed to have gone all right, though there had been no applause when he had sat down. Instead, a little silence had followed; and when the conversation round the table was renewed it had been in a subdued tone, as though some new note had been struck.

Foolish though it seemed, it was this slight episode that had finally decided him that he must speak with her this very night. Too long he had put it off, whispering to himself now one excuse, now another. It had come to him while he had been preparing his speech for the unveiling of the war memorial: How long was he going to play the coward? When was he going to answer the call of his King, his country?

When had that call first come to him? What voice—what vision had first spoken to him? He tried to think. There had been no trumpet call. No pillar of light had flashed before his eyes. It had come to him in little whispers of the wind, in little pluckings at his sleeve. Some small wild creature's cry of pain. The sorrow of a passing face. The story of a wrong done, when or where

it did not matter. Always the darkness was full of reproachful eyes accusing him of delay.

It seemed to him that he was standing beside God in some vast doorless chamber, listening to the falling of the tears of the world—the tears of all the ages that were past, the tears of the ages yet to come; and God's sad eyes were watching him.

If he could take her with him. If only she would come with him. There had been a moment at the beginning of the war when it might have been: those days of terror when the boy lay wounded unto death; and he had heard her cry out in the night: "Oh, God, take all I have but that." Had he urged her then? Honours, riches! In that moment she would have known their true value. But the child had lived, and all her desires were now for him. She would resent whatever might make to his detriment. No, he would have to go alone.

How was he going to put it into words? How could he hurt her least, while at the same time leaving no opening for false hope? He had purposely avoided thinking it out. It would be useless coming to her with cut and dried phrases. He would not be laying down the law. He would be pleading for forgiveness, for understanding.

He could picture the bewilderment that would come into her eyes as slowly his meaning dawned upon her: giving place to anger, despair. It would seem to her that she had never known him, that she had been living with a strange man. Why had he not taken her into his confidence years ago, made her the sharer of his dreams—his visions? How did he know she would not have sympathized with him? It was his love for her that had made him false—or rather his love for himself. He had wanted to come to her always with gifts, so that she might be grateful to him, proud of him. Now it was too late. It would seem to her that all these years he had been living apart, her husband only in body. She would feel herself a woman scorned.

He smiled to himself, recalling how at the beginning of the Great War, as they had named it, the hope had come to him that after all he might not have to drink this cup. God was going to do without man's help. Out of one stupendous sacrifice of blood and tears the world was to be born anew. Sin was to destroy her own children; man's greed and hate was to be burned up in the fire man's evil passions had kindled. It was a strange delusion. Others had shared it. With the bitter awakening a dumb apathy had seized him, paralysing his soul. Of what use was the struggle. The gibe was true:

"Mankind would always remain a race of low intelligence and evil instincts." Let it perish, the sooner the better.

And then, gradually, out of his despair, had arisen in him a great pity for God. It startled him at first. It was so grotesque an idea. And yet it grew upon him. The mysterious warfare between Good and Evil. It shaped itself in his brain, a thing concrete, visible. The loneliness of God. He saw Him as a Leader betrayed, deserted; his followers fleeing from him, hastening to make their peace with evil. He must find his way to God's side. God wanted him.

It was no passing mood. The thought took possession of him. All other voices sounded to him faint and trivial.

His sorrow was for her. If he could but have spared her. For himself he felt joy that the struggle was over, that he had conquered, that nothing now could turn him from his purpose. He would get rid of all his affairs—of everything, literally. Not for the sake of the poor. If all the riches of the world were gathered together and given to the poor it would be but a stirring of the waters, a moment's shifting of the social landmarks. Greed and selfishness would shape themselves anew. From time immemorial the rich had

flung money to the poor, and the poor had ever increased in numbers, had sunk ever poorer. Money was a dead thing. It carried with it the seeds of destruction. Love, service, were the only living gifts. It was for his own sake—to escape, in the words of Timothy, from many hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdiction, that he must flee from his great possessions. No man could possess money without loving money. Only in common poverty—in common contentment with having food and raiment could there be brotherhood, love.

He had made his plans. He would rent a small house, next door to where his mother still lived in Bruton Square, and practise there as a solicitor. The old lady was still active and capable. If need be—if he had to go alone—she could keep house for him. He was keen on Bruton Square. It was where the mean part of the town began. It would not be too far for the poor to come to him. The little modest house would not frighten them with suggestion of charges beyond their means, of contemptuous indifference to their unprofitable bits of business. He would be able to help them, to keep them from falling into the hands of charlatans. They would come to trust him in their troubles. He might often be able to serve as mediator, as

peacemaker between them. It would be a legitimate way of earning his living.

It was essential that he should earn his living. That seemed to him of tremendous importance. If the world were to be saved it must be saved by all men working together for God. That must be the dream, the goal. He wanted to tell men that the Christ-life could be lived not by the few but by all; not alone by celibates and mendicants—of what use would that be—but by men with wives and children. It must come to be the life of the street, the market-place, the home.

If she would come with him, join her voice with his, tell the people that man and woman could live happily together without this luxury and ostentation for which Youth daily sold its birthright of love and joy, condemned itself to frenzied toil and haunting fear; that life was not a thing of furniture and clothes, of many servants, of fine houses and rich foods; that a man and woman who had known these things could choose to give them up, find comfort and content without them; that having food and raiment there was no need of this savage struggling for more—this greed and covetousness that for so long had pierced the world with many sorrows. If only she would come with him. Together they might light a lamp.

How could he ask her? The mere physical discomforts and privations, it would not be the fear of these that would hold her back. Demand the heroic of her—call upon her, in the name of any cause worth fighting for, to face suffering, death itself, and she would put her hand in his and go with him gladly. She had envied Betty, going out alone to fight starvation and disease amid the terrors of a winter in the Russian steppes.

"I'd have loved to be going with her," she had told him. "It must be from my mother that it comes to me. Some strange thing happened to her when she was a girl. She would never tell me what, though I knew it had been her trouble all her life. And when she lay dying she drew me down to her, and whispered to me that in her youth God had called to her and she had not obeyed. It was dad and we children that had hindered her. She had married a husband so she could not come."

She had laughed and kissed him. He remembered the tears in her eyes and the little catch in her voice.

But there was nothing heroic about this thing that he wanted to do. It was the littleness, the meanness of it that would freeze her sympathies. Her sense of humour would rise up against it. Was there no better way of serving Christ than by

setting up as a pettifogging solicitor in a little square of faded gentility. And a solicitor of all professions! A calling so eminently suggestive of the Scribe and Pharisee. Was there not danger of the whole thing being smothered under laughter?

And why here in Millsborough where everybody knew him? Where they would be stared at, called after in the street, snapshotted and paragraphed in the local Press; where they would be the laughing stock of the whole town, a nuisance round the neck of all their friends and acquaintances. The boy's career: he would be the butt of the messroom. Norah's engagement: it would have to be broken off. What man wants to marry into a family of cranks? Could it serve Christ for His would-be followers to cover themselves with ridicule.

It was just because his going on with his own business had seemed to him the simplest, plainest path before him that he had chosen it. He had thought at one time of asking Matthew Witlock to let him come as his assistant in the workshop. He had retained much of his old skill as a mechanic. With a little practice it would come back to him. He would have enjoyed the work: the swinging of the hammer, the flashing of the sparks, the harmony of hand and brain. His desk had always

bored him. The idea had grown upon him. It would have been like going home. He would have met there the little impish lad who had once been himself. Old Wandering Peter would have sat cross-legged upon the bench and talked to him. He would have come across his father, pottering about among the shadows; would have joked with him. Strong kindly Matthew of the dreamy eyes would have been sweet, helpful company. Together they would have listened to the passing footsteps. There, if anywhere, might have come the Master.

It had cost him an effort to dismiss the desire. He so wanted to preach the practical, the rational. We could not all be blacksmiths. We could not all do big things, heroic things. But we could all work for God, wherever and whatever we happened to be; that was the idea he wanted to set going.

He wanted to preach to men that the Christ-life was possible for all: for the shop-keeper, for the artisan, for the doctor, for the lawyer, for the labourer, for the business man. He wanted to tell the people that Christ had not to be sought for in any particular place, that he was here; that we had only to open the door and He would come to us just where we were. One went on with one's work, whatever it was, the thing that lay nearest to one,

the thing one could do best. We changed the Master not the work, took other wages.

He wanted to tell it in Millsborough for the reason that it was the only place where he could be sure of being listened to. Nowhere else could he hope to attract the same attention. He wanted to attract attention—to advertise, if any cared to put it that way. It was the business man in him that had insisted upon Millsborough. In Millsborough, for a time—for quite a long time—this thing would be the chief topic of conversation. Men would discuss it, argue around it, think about it when alone.

In Millsborough he had influence. In Millsborough, if anywhere, he might hope to find followers. For twenty years he had been held up to the youth of Millsborough as a shining example: the man who had climbed, the man who had "got on," the man who had won all the rewards the devil promises to those who will fall down and worship him, wealth, honour, power—the kingdoms of the earth. He stood for the type of Millsborough's hero: the clever man, the knowing man, the successful man; the man who always got the best of the bargain; the man who always came out on top; the man who whatever might happen to others always managed to fall on his feet. "Keep your eye on

Anthony Strong'nth'arm." In Millsborough it had become a saying. The man to be in with, the man to put your money on, the man God always prospered.

He could hear them—see their round, staring eyes. He could not help but grin as he thought of it. Anthony Strong'nth'arm declines a peerage. Anthony Strong'nth'arm resigns his chairmanship of this, that and the other most prosperous concern; his directorship in half a dozen high dividend-paying companies; gets rid of his vast holdings in twenty sound profitable enterprises; gives up his great office in St. Aldys Close, furniture, fittings and goodwill all included; writes a courteous letter of farewell to all his wealthy clients; takes a seven-roomed house in Bruton Square, rent thirty-two pounds a year; puts up his plate on the door: "Anthony John Strong'nth'arm, Solicitor. Also Commissioner for Oaths. Office hours, ten to four." What's the meaning of it? The man is not a fool. Has never, at any time, shown indications of insanity. What's he up to? What's come into his head? If it's God he is thinking of, what's wrong with the church or the chapel, or even the Pope, if he must have a change? Does he want a religion all to himself? Is it the poor that are troubling him? He'd do better for them, going on

with his money-making, giving them ten—twenty, fifty per cent., if he liked, of his profits. What is the explanation? What does he say about it—Anthony Strong'nth'arm himself?

They would have to listen to him. If only from curiosity they would hear him out to the end. It might be but a nine days' wonder; the talk grow tiresome, the laughter die away. That was not his affair. He wanted to help. He was sure this was the best thing he could do.

He had not noticed the door open. She was standing before him. She drew his face down to her and kissed him.

"Thank you," she whispered, "for one of the happiest days of my life."

He held her to him for a while without speaking. He could feel the beating of her heart.

"There is something I want to tell you," he said.

She put a hand upon his lips. "I know," she answered. "In three minutes time. Then you shall tell me."

They stood with their arms round one another till the old French clock upon the mantelpiece had softly chimed the twelve hours. Then she released him, and seating herself in her usual chair, looked at him and waited.

CHAPTER XVIII

HE had not asked her for an answer. She had promised to think it out. She might wish to talk it over with Jim. She and Jim had always been very near to one another. And there were the children to be consulted. She was to be quite free to choose. Everything would be arranged according to her decision. He had said nothing to persuade her—unless he had hoped that by explaining to her his own reasons he might influence her,—and beyond a few questions she had remained a silent listener. It was shamefacedly, as one confessing a guilty secret, that he had told her. From the tones of his voice, the look in his eyes, she had read his unconscious pleading to her to come with him. But whether she went with him or stayed behind would make no difference to his going. It was that had hardened her.

To a certain extent she had been prepared. Ever since the child John's death she had felt the change that was taking place in him. There was an Anthony she did not know, dimly associated in her mind with that lover of her dream who standing by the latchet gate had beckoned to her, and

from whom she had hidden herself, afraid. She had set herself to turn his thoughts aside towards social reform, philanthropy. It was with this idea she had urged him to throw himself into public affairs, to prepare for Parliament. She had hoped for that. There she could have helped him. It would have satisfied her own craving to be doing something herself.

And then the war had engulfed them, obliterating all other horizons: it had left her nothing but her animal emotions. Her boy's life! She could think of nothing else. Norah was in France: and she also was in the danger zone. The need of work obsessed her. She had found a rambling old house, far away upon the moors, and had converted it into a convalescent hospital.

Labour was scarce and the entire management had fallen upon her own shoulders. Anthony's duties had confined him to Millsborough. For years they had seen one another only for a few hours at a time. There had been no opportunity for intimate talk. It was not until her return home to The Abbey that her fear had come back to her. There was no definable reason. It was as if it had always been there—a presence, waiting its time. One evening, walking in the garden, she had seen him standing there by the latchet gate, and had

crept back into the house. She had the feeling that it would be there, by the latchet gate, that he would tell her. So long as she could avoid meeting him there she could put it off, indefinitely. The surer she felt of it, the more important it seemed to her to put it off—for a little while longer: she could not explain to herself why. It was when, without speaking, he had pressed her to him so close that she had felt the pain in his body, that she knew the time had come for her to face it.

What answer was she to make him? It seemed such a crazy idea. To give up The Abbey. To think of strangers living there. It had been the home of her people for five centuries. Their children had been born there. For twenty years they had worked there lovingly together to make it more beautiful. It would be like tearing oneself up by the roots. To turn one's back upon the glorious moors—to go down into the grimy sordid town, to live in a little poky house with one servant; presuming the Higher Christianity permitted of even that. Yes, they would get themselves talked about: no doubt of that.

To do her own shopping. She had noticed them —passing them by swiftly in her shining car—tired women, carrying large network bags bulging with parcels. Some of them rode bicycles. She found

herself wondering abstractedly whether she would be able to afford a bicycle. She had learnt to ride a bicycle when a girl. But that was long ago. She wondered whether she would be able to pick it up again. She pictured herself bargaining outside the butchers' shops, examining doubtful looking chickens—when chickens were cheap. There was a particular test you had to apply. She would have to make enquiries. She could see the grinning faces of the tradesmen, hear their oily tongues of mock politeness.

Her former friends and acquaintances—county folk who had motored in for a day's shopping, the stout be-jewelled wives of the rich magnates and manufacturers of Millsborough. Poor ladies! how worried they would be, not knowing what to do, meeting her by chance in the street. She with her umbrella and her parcels. And their red-faced husbands who would squeeze her hand and try to say the right thing. There would be plenty of comedy—at first, anyhow. That was the trouble. Tragedy she could have faced. This was going to be farce.

The dulness—the appalling dulness of it. The long evenings in the one small living room. She would have to learn sewing—make her own dresses, while Anthony read aloud to her. He read rather

well. Perhaps, by help of great economy in the housekeeping, they might be able to purchase a piano, on the hire system—or would it have to be a harmonium?

She had risen. From the window, she could see the cloud of smoke beneath which the people of Millsborough moved and had their being.

Why should it seem so impossible. Her present ordered existence, mapped out from year to year, calling for neither thought nor effort, admitting of neither hope nor fear, the sheltered life of a pampered child—had not that also its dulness, its monotony? Why did rich people rent saeters in Norway, live there for months at a time on hunter's fare, doing their own cooking and cleaning—welcome the perils and hardships of mountain climbing; of big game shooting; of travels into unknown lands; choose danger, privation and toil, and call it a "holiday"? Had not she herself found the simple living and hard work of the hospital a welcome change from everlasting luxuriousness? Would the Garden of Eden have been the ideal home for men and women with brains and hands? Might not earning one's living by the sweat of one's brow be better sport?

Need those evenings after the day's work was done be of necessity so deadly? Her great din-

ners at The Abbey, with all their lights and lackeys, had they always been such feasts of intellectuality? Surely she had had social experience enough to teach her that brains were a thing apart from birth and breeding, that wit and wisdom were not the monopoly of the well-to-do. It came back to her, the memory of her girlhood's days when they had lived in third-rate boarding-houses in Rome and Florence; rented small furnished *appartements* in French provincial towns; cheap lodgings in Dresden and Hanover. There had been no lack of fun and laughter in those days. Those musical evenings to which each student brought his own beer, and was mightily careful to take back with him the empty bottles, for which otherwise ten pfennigs would be charged. How busy she and her mother had been beforehand, cutting the sandwiches, and how sparing of the butter! Some of the players had made world-famous names; and others had died or maybe still lived—unknown. One of them she had heard just recently, paying ten guineas for her box; but his music had sounded no sweeter than when she had listened to it sitting beside Jim on the uncarpeted floor, there not being chairs enough to go round. Where had she heard better talk than from the men with shiny coat sleeves and frayed trousers who had come to sup with her father off

maccaroni and chianti at two lire the flask. There might be clever brilliant men and women even in Millsborough. So far as she could judge she had never succeeded in securing any of them for her great receptions at The Abbey. They might be less shy of dropping in at Bruton Square.

It was what one felt, not what one had, that was the source of our pleasure. It was the school boy's appetite, not a Rockefeller's wealth that purchased the good dinner. The nursery filled with expensive toys: the healthy child had no need of them. It was the old rag doll, clutched tight to our bosom that made the attic into heaven. It was astride on the wooden horse without a head that we shouted our loudest. We over-burdened life with empty show, turned man into a mannikin. We sacrificed the play to the scenery and dresses. Four walls and a passion were all that the poet demanded.

Whence had come this idea that wealth brought happiness? Not from the rich. Surely they must have learnt better, by this time.

It was not the enjoyable things of life that cost money. These acres of gardens where one never got away from one's own gardeners! What better were they than a public park? It was in the hidden corner we had planted and tended ourselves—where we knew and loved each flower, where each

whispering tree was a comrade that we met God in the evening. It was the pleasant living room, where each familiar piece of furniture smiled a welcome to us when we entered, that was home. Through half-a-dozen "reception rooms," we wandered, a stranger. The millionaire, who, reckoning interest at five per cent., paid ten thousand a year to possess an old master—how often really did he look at it? What greater artistic enjoyment did he get out of it than from looking at it in a public gallery? The joy of possession, it was the joy of the miser, of the dog in the manger. Were the silver birches in the moonlight more beautiful because we owned the freehold of the hill?

She remembered her walking tours with Jim. Their packs upon their backs, and the open road before them. The evening meal at the wayside Inn, and the sweet sleep between coarse sheets. She had never cared for travel since then. It had always been such a business: the luggage and the crowd, and the general hullaballoo.

What would the children say? Well, they could not preach, either of them: there was that consolation. The boy, at the beginning of the war, and without saying a word to either of them, had thrown up everything, had gone out as a common soldier —he had been so fearful they might try to stop

him—facing death for an ideal. She certainly was not going to be afraid of anything he could say, after that.

Norah's armour would prove even yet more vulnerable. Norah, a young lady brought up amid all the traditions of respectability, had dared even ridicule; had committed worse than crimes—vulgarities. A militant suffragette reproving fanaticism need not be listened to attentively.

But this case she was thinking of was exceptional. Whatever Anthony and she might choose to do with the remainder of their lives need not affect their children. Norah and Jim would be free to choose for themselves. But the young mother faced with the problem of her children's future? Ten years ago, what answer would she herself have made?

The argument took hold of her. She found herself working it out not as a personal concern, but in terms of the community. Was it necessary to be rich that one's children should be happy? Childhood would answer "no." It is not little Lord Fauntleroy who clamours for the velvet suit and the lace collar. It is not Princess Goldenlocks who would keep close barred the ivory gate that leads into the wood. Childhood has no use for riches. Childhood's joys are cheap enough. Youth's

pleasures can be purchased for little more than health and comradeship. The cricket bat, the tennis racket, the push bike, the leaky boat that one bought for a song and had the fun of patching up and making good; even that crown of the young world's desire, the motor-cycle itself—these and their kindred were not the things for which one need to sell one's soul. Education depended upon the scholar not the school. Was the future welfare of our children helped by our being rich? or hindered?

Suppose we brought up our children not to believe in riches, not to be afraid of poverty: not to be afraid of love in a six-roomed house, not to believe that they were bound to be just twice as happy in a house containing twelve, and thereby save themselves the fret and frenzy of trying to get there: the bitterness and heart break of those who never reached it. The love of money, the belief in money, was it not the root of nine-tenths of the world's sorrow? Suppose one taught one's children not to fall down and worship it, not to sacrifice to it their youth and health and joy. Might they not be better off—in a quite material way?

It occurred to her suddenly that she had not as yet thought about it from the religious point of of view. She laughed. It had always been said

that it was woman who was the practical. It was man, was the dreamer.

But was she not right? Had that not been the whole trouble: that we had drawn a dividing line between our religion and our life, rendering our actions unto Caesar, and only our lips unto God? Christianity was Common Sense in the highest—was sheer Worldly Wisdom. The proof was staring her in the face. From the bay of the deep window, looking eastward, she could see it standing out against the flame-lit sky, the great grey Cross with round its base the young men's names in golden letters.

The one thing man did well—make war. Man's one success—the fighting machine. The one institution man had built up that had stood the test of time. The one thing man had made perfect —War.

The one thing to which man had applied the principles of Christianity. Above all things required of the soldier was self-forgetfulness, self-sacrifice. The place of suffering became the place of honour. The forlorn hope a privilege to be contended for. To the soldier, alone among men, love thy neighbour as thyself—nay, better than thyself—was inculcated not as a meaningless formula, but as a sacred duty necessary to the very exist-

ence of the Regiment. When war broke out in a land, the teachings of Christ were immediately recognized to be the only sensible guide to conduct. At the time, Anthony's suggestion had seemed monstrous to her; that he should ask her to give up riches, accept poverty, that he should put a vague impersonal love of humanity above his natural affection for her children and herself! But if it had been England and not God that he had been thinking of—if, at any moment during the war, it had seemed to him that the welfare of England demanded this, or even greater sacrifice, she would have approved. The very people whose ridicule she was now dreading would have applauded. Who had suggested to the young recruit that he should think of his wife and children before his country, that his first duty was to provide for them, to see to it that they had their comforts, their luxuries: and then—and not till then—to think of England? She had regarded his determination to go down into the smoky dismal town, to live his life there among common people, as foolish, fantastic. He could have helped the poor of Millsborough better by keeping his possessions, showering down upon them benefits and blessings. He could have been of more help to God, powerful and rich, a leader among men. As a strug-

gling solicitor in Bruton Square of what use could he be?

Had she thought like that, during the war, of the men who had given money but who had shirked the mud and blood of the trenches—of the shouters who had pointed out to others the gate of service?

Neither rich nor poor, neither great nor simple —only comrades. Would it ever be won, the war to end war—man's victory over himself.

The pall of smoke above the distant town had merged into the night. In its place there gleamed a dull red glow, as of a pillar of fire.

She turned and faced herself in the great Cheval glass with its frame of gilded cupids. She was still young—in the fulness of her life and beauty; the years with their promise of power and pleasure still opening out before her.

And suddenly it came to her that this was the Great Adventure of the World, calling to the brave and hopeful to follow, heedless, where God's trumpet led. Somewhere—perhaps near, perhaps far—there lay the Promised Land. It might be theirs' to find it—at least to see it from afar. If not—! Their feet should help to mark the road.

Yes, she too would give up her possessions; put fear behind her. Together, hand in hand, they would go forward, joyously.

THE END

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